



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 84.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL AND THE GIANT MINER

OR
THE MOUNTED SHARPS OF THE OVERLAND



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
"BUFFALO BILL"

THERE WERE TWO QUICK SHOTS, BUT BUFFALO BILL WAS THE QUICKER IN DRAWING TRIGGER, AND THE OUTLAW CHIEF FELL
WITH A MORTAL WOUND.



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BUFFALO BILL AND THE SCOUT MINER;

OR

The Mounted Sharps of the Overland.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE MISSING GIRL.

Outfit City was one of the smallest of the many little posts along the Overland coach trail.

It was into this little hamlet that Buffalo Bill, chief of scouts, rode one fine October afternoon.

At this time Buffalo Bill was engaged upon a special mission.

It was to put an end to the constant succession of robberies that had been going on along the Overland trails and especially to put an end to the depredations of an unusually bold band of thieves who called themselves the Mounted Sharps of the Overland.

Lloyd Winter, the superintendent of that portion of the Overland trails, had applied to the government for extra protection along this part of the trail.

Buffalo Bill, the finest scout the world has ever produced, was assigned to the duty.

A few days before news had been received that a California rancher, Lee Insley by name, was to pass along the trail going eastward, carrying with him his fortune, consisting of \$50,000 in jewels and money.

His daughter, Lola Insley, a daring frontier girl, had been the means of foiling the bandits who had heard of the rich prize, and had laid special plans to capture it.

The father had not arrived in the coach he was expected to travel in, as he had been taken sick at a point further back on the road, but the girl had gone on herself on a coach other than the one she was expected to travel on.

Buffalo Bill had come to guard the coach along the roads, and she had turned over the jewels and money to him for safe keeping while she went on to Outfit City.

That same night the bandits, one of whom was a negro, another a Chinaman, disappointed in their plan to get Insley's money, had raided another coach and taken off as prisoners two young men who had been on a visit west to friends at Fort Faraway, the nearby military post.

Buffalo Bill knew one of the bandits—the negro, known as Darkey Dick, who had been charged with robbery and murdering a man at Fort Faraway, but who had escaped.

Buffalo Bill had two objects in going to Outfit City.

One was to turn over to Lola Insley the valuables which he had been carrying for her, the other was to inform Lloyd Winter of the kidnaping of the two young men and to prepare himself with provisions and supplies so that he could run down the outlaws and rescue their prisoners.

He met Lloyd Winter, the superintendent of the Overland trail, at the only hotel in the place, and made his report.

Winter gave him some news that surprised him

"Lola Insley has been captured by the outlaws," he said. "The coach she traveled in was empty when it arrived here.

"But I am glad that the valuables are safe, anyway," he added, as the scout turned over the bag containing the money and jewels to him for safe keeping.

Buffalo Bill started and stared at Winter.

"Captured!" he exclaimed. "Nebraska Ned was the driver of the coach she traveled in."

"Yes, and a good driver he is," said the superintendent; "the coach arrived here empty and there is no way of knowing how the girl was taken out of it. The door was closed and the coach had not been broken open in any way, so far as we could see. Ned was nearly crazy. He thought his passenger was safe asleep in the coach until he drove in here and found it empty."

"That takes me back a little, I must confess," said Buffalo Bill. "I see I have my work cut out for me. Two men, visitors to Fort Faraway, have been held for ransom, and now that this girl is captured that makes three prisoners that the outlaws have in their possession."

"I have more news for you, too," said the superintendent.

"What is it?"

"Lee Insley, the father of the girl who was captured, is coming through to Outfit City to-night."

"I thought he was sick."

"He has recovered sufficiently to travel, and besides he is very anxious to join his daughter. He thinks she is here at Outfit City."

"Has he hired a special coach?"

"Yes; the coach we call the California coach has been reserved for his use."

"When is he due here?"

"An hour or so after the regular coach."

"Well, then, I have no time to lose," said Buffalo Bill. "The outlaws seem to be on the trails in full force, and they would never let a prize like Lee Insley go by. They don't know that I have deposited his money safe and sound here at Outfit City, and they'll attack his coach sure. I have time to foil them, though."

"How?"

"The dangerous part of the road—that is the portion of the trail where Captain Coolhand and his Mounted Sports get in their fine work—lies between here and the relay station. If I can reach there before the coach I will guide it here by a trail known only to myself, avoiding the regular roads. The outlaws may then wait all night for the coach, but they'll never see it."

The relay station where the coaches going to Outfit City were supplied with fresh horses was known as Lone Sam's cabin, as it was situated on a lonely part of the trail, and the relay agent who had charge of the horses of the Overland Company stationed there was a solitary individual known as Lone Sam.

It was situated fully thirty miles from Outfit City.

Could the scout reach it in time?

That was the question that rose to the lips of Lloyd Winters, the superintendent of the Overland trail.

Buffalo Bill answered it by springing to his feet and calling to the landlord of the hotel in which the conversation took place.

"Roots and saddles is the word!" he cried, as he sprang

upon his prancing steed and lightly touched its glossy flanks with his gleaming spurs.

He was away in a cloud of dust, flying at a gallop down the lonely road.

It was a long ride.

Night was coming on apace, but the scout cared little for the gathering darkness and at last he reached the solitary cabin of Lone Sam, the stock-tender.

Sam was not visible about the place as the scout dismounted, but a glance at the horses in the corral showed him that the California coach had not yet arrived.

All the horses there were fresh. This would not have been the case had the California coach been there and gone, for the tired horses that had taken it that far would have been kept in the corral and replaced by fresh ones.

CHAPTER II.

LONE SAM'S RESCUE.

Buffalo Bill had much to meditate over, in the happenings of the night, and he sat gazing into the smoldering fire which he found in Lone Sam's cabin with his mind busy.

He was pleased that he had gotten rid of the large treasure intrusted to his keeping, and felt that it at least was safe.

Having done his duty thus far, Buffalo Bill could only wait for the coming of the California coach, for there was nothing else that he could do.

In the meantime Nebraska Ned was driving along the trail on his way back from Outfit City, where he had received no passengers, and where he had received a severe reprimand from Winters for allowing his passenger to be kidnaped, with the appearance of an utterly dejected man. He had left Outfit City before Buffalo Bill, but the scout had taken an almost unknown trail which was much shorter than the regular coach road.

Every few minutes there would break from the lips of Nebraska Ned the exclamation:

"My God! My God!

"I am a ruined man!"

He seemed to go on his way mechanically, allowing his horses to take their own way, and although it was already dark they seemed to know their way well.

As he ascended the long slope which the trail wound up to the ridge, thus crossing the mountains where the outlaws held such an advantage, a voice sounded ahead in the darkness:

"Halt!

"Hands up, Nebraska Ned!"

"All right! I've halted, so have your way, for you can't do me any harm now," was the meek response.

"It is not the custom of the Mountain Sharps to harm the drivers of the coaches at any time, unless they force us to give them a lesson," was the answer that came out of the darkness ahead.

"Well, have your way; but you'll get nothing from my coach this night."

"That remains to be seen."

"I'm not lying to you."

"I had a rich freight, but it was stolen miles back."

"Do you mean this?" asked the voice quickly, for the man was not yet visible.

"I does."

"Well, there was a lady along."

"Yes; go on."

"She has dead boodles of wealth."

"I see."

"But what became of it?"

"It was taken, too."

"Ah! a rich haul indeed; but I would rather be sure of this, for you drivers are experts at lying."

"Well, go through the old hearse, and if you find anything of value yer is welcome to it as a gift from me."

"I knew that you had a lady passenger who carried a rich freight; but I will have a talk with her."

"I wish to God you could."

"What do you mean?"

"I me! that you blamed cutthroats has got her, too."

"What! Did they take her?"

"Look in the coach and you'll find her gone. She was travelin' to Outfit City, an' you fellers got her on the trip there. She wasn't comin' back this way, anyway. She was going East."

"Then you must have been held up after I got the word to halt."

"I don't know nothin' about what you got, but I does know ther boodle is all gone, and the ledgy, too."

"Was it Captain Coolhand himself?"

"I don't know you devils one from t'other."

"Were there more than one road agent?"

"How many has you got with you?"

"Why?"

"If I thought you was alone I'd chance it, fer I feel like killin' somebody to-night, indeed I does."

"I'd feel better."

"Well, I warn you not to try it on me, for it would cause you to weigh several pounds more as a dead man than you do now, my men would pile you so full of lead."

"Show 'em up."

"Why?"

"Seein' is believin'."

"It is too dark for you to see; but I'll give you a hint that I am not alone."

"Let's have it," and Nebraska Ned was growing reckless under his trouble.

"Three of you men send a shot over that fool's head," came the stern command.

Instantly there were three flashes, all a dozen feet apart, and one of the bullets shivered the coach lamp to atoms.

"That's enough of that blamed nonsense now," growled Nebraska Ned, reining in his leaders, who were startled by the shots.

"Hearing is believing sometimes as well as seein'," said the road agent leader, with a laugh.

"Well, you take a peep in ther coach ter see thet the ledgy is gone, and s'arch ther outfit if yer feels like it, fer I wants ter git along."

The road agent, as though no longer dreading to expose himself to Ned's fire, after revealing that he had comrades near, walked boldly toward the coach, threw open the door, and flashed the glare of a dark lantern inside.

He saw that the coach was empty, and muttered: "Well, the captain got the lady and the freight."

With this he turned the light upon Nebraska Ned, blinding him momentarily with the glare.

As he did so there came a flash back down the trail, a report, and a bullet shattered the bull's-eye lantern held in the hand of the road agent.

Then came the words:

"Now, pards, charge them hard!"

CHAPTER III.

LONE SAM'S MISSION.

Whether the unexpected and well-aimed shot, fired back down the trail, shattered the hand of the road agent or not, Nebraska Ned could not tell.

But he heard a cry as of pain, a curse, and the outlaw disappeared.

His eyes momentarily blinded by the intense glare of the bull's-eye lantern, Nebraska Ned did not see just which way the outlaw went.

But when he had checked his restive leaders he heard the sound in the timber as of men in rapid flight, though they seemed to have delayed a minute before running off, as though to ascertain the force of the rescue party.

Looking back down the trail, Nebraska Ned could see nothing in the darkness, but he heard the rapid clatter of hoofs, and a moment after there dashed up to the coach a single horseman, a revolver in each hand, and he called out in loud tones:

"Which way did they go, Ned, for my men can catch them?"

The driver saw that there was but one man, that he had made a bold bluff to save him, but he carried out the idea that there were more, and replied in a loud tone:

"There on the right, pards."

"Yer kin hear 'em a shovin' lively."

Then he said in a low tone:

"Why, Lone Sam, it's you?"

"Yes, pard."

"And all by your little lonesome?"

"All alone, Ned."

"How did yer do it?"

"I was takin' a ride to give one of the horses some exercise, heard the shots, halted, hitched my horse, crept up, got a glance of the bull's-eye light, aimed at it, and that is all."

"But I didn't kill my man?"

"Not unless he dies o' fright, from the way he lit out."

"But I'm obliged to you, Pard Sam, and you bet I'm yer friend fer yer game act this night, fer it were Buffalo Bill's way o' doing things. Here I am; but I'm awful down, fer yer has heard about the ledgy?"

"Yes."

"But ain't it awful?"

"I cannot account for her disappearance, Ned."

"Did you hear no sound in the coach?"

"Not a sound."

"It is remarkable; but I am sure Buffalo Bill has determined to take the trail, and you bet he'll soon unearth the mystery of her leaving your coach and what has become of her."

"I hopes so. I believes so."

Ned drove on his way once more.

And back over the trail also went Lone Sam, the stock-tender.

The dawn had not yet come when he rode up to his cabin, and to his surprise found that Buffalo Bill was in his cabin and not alone, for there were two others with him, and they were men who did not wear the garb of the frontier, but instead the dress of civilization.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE VISITORS.

Lone Sam was not one whom any one would have suspected of leading the life of a stock-tender on the Overland trail.

He was a man of compactly built form, fine face, some thirty years of age, and a manner and bearing that were courteous and not in the least spoiled by the rough life he was forced to lead.

That he had been well born and educated, reared amid refined surroundings, was evident.

And yet a year before he had come to his little cabin to attend stock for the Overland coaches.

He would have been allowed a comrade to aid him, and help in defending the stage horses, but he declined assistance, preferring to be alone, and so the name of Lone Sam was promptly given him by the drivers, who only knew that he had simply said that his name was Sam.

He had quickly built for himself a very comfortable cabin, had sent east for glass and put it in the windows, and his little home was as attractive and comfortable as any officer's quarters in the fort.

He had a number of books, some pictures, a guitar, sang well, and appeared to enjoy his lone life.

But his horses were always in the best condition, he lived well, the drivers all knowing where they could get a good meal; the man was popular with all, though a mystery on account of one of his capabilities being content to live such a life.

He was a dashing rider, a dead shot and could sketch well.

Twice he had been attacked by outlaws, and several times by prowling bands of Indians, seeking to run off his stock, but a group of graves back under the pines showed how deadly had been his aim, or brave his defense, and so Lone Sam, the stock-tender, had been left severely alone for the past few months.

Buffalo Bill had always liked the man, and felt that he was to be implicitly trusted, but he was a mystery to the scout as well as to others.

Looking over his pleasant cabin when he found it empty, Buffalo Bill saw his books, his sketches, and other evidences of refined taste.

"I wonder what can have brought that man out here to lead a wild life," muttered the scout.

"Soldiers are brought here in the discharge of duty, and, as for myself, it was bred in the bone to be a frontiersman; but I cannot exactly understand a man raised so strangely at variance with this life of danger and hardship, as he seems to have been, voluntarily taking it up."

Thus mused the scout as he sat in the cabin of Lone Sam.

Suddenly he started. The light was quickly extinguished, and, stepping to the door, rifle in hand, Buffalo Bill stood in an attitude of listening.

He heard the approach of several men, and they were talking as they came on.

Suddenly came a challenge in the scout's stern tones: "Halt!"

"Who comes there?"

The men halted, and a voice called out:

"Ho, Lone Sam, we are coming to your cabin."

"Who are you?"

"The detectives you know, from the Giant Miner's cabin."

"Where are you going?"

"Our man is well enough to travel now, and we have come to take him East in the stage that goes by to-night."

Buffalo Bill was mystified.

Who and what were these men who called themselves detectives?

He had heard of no such men being in the country.

Besides he knew that the regular coach eastward would not pass there that night, Lloyd Winter having told him that it had been discontinued.

But it must be that Lone Sam knew about them.

The one they spoke of as the Giant Miner he had heard of—had, in fact, seen several times.

He knew him as a man of giant form, who dwelt alone in the mountains, going to the camp only when he needed provisions, and constantly on the search for gold.

The Indians were afraid of him, the outlaws left him alone, and yet he was considered harmless, and a feverish searcher after gold, which it was said he never found, save only enough to buy food with.

Was it this man the detectives now said they had, and who was well enough to go East?

It could be no other, decided the scout.

So he called out:

"I will light a lamp; so come on to the cabin."

As the lamp shed its light through the cabin, the men started on beholding a stranger to them where they had expected to see Lone Sam.

Two men in citizens' dress entered, and one stood on each side of a man of giant stature, with his head bound up with a handkerchief, a savage gleam in his deep sunken eyes, and his general appearance haggard, unkempt, and with the appearance of suffering.

It was the Giant Miner of the mountains.

The other two men Buffalo Bill did not know.

CHAPTER V.

THE GIANT MINER.

Buffalo Bill was really startled at the appearance of the Giant Miner, so changed from when he had before seen him.

Then he was always neat in his attire, his hair and beard well kept, and his general appearance prepossessing.

Now he seemed like a man who had been hunted down, who stood awed in the face of foes.

What could it mean?

The two men were resolute, athletic fellows, and Buffalo Bill saw that they were strangers to the border.

The scout also saw that the Giant Miner was manacled, small steel handcuffs being on his wrists.

"You are not Lone Sam, the stock-tender?" said one of the men, sternly.

"I did not claim to be, gentlemen."

"Who are you?"

"A pard of Lone Sam."

"Has the eastbound coach gone by?"

"Some hours ago."

"Then we missed it?"

"If you are going East—yes."

"It was ahead of time, then?"

"On the contrary, it was a trifle behind."

"Does it not pass here in the middle of the night?"

"No; soon after nightfall, if on time."

"Then we have made a mistake, or misunderstood Lone Sam when he told us."

"Doubtless."

"And we must wait another week for another coach?"

"Five days."

"That is too bad, for our man is able to travel now, and he may get violent by delay."

"Why have you that man in irons?"

"Do you know him?"

"Yes, as a harmless gold-hunter known as the Giant Miner."

"He is not so harmless as you think."

"Indeed?"

"He appears now to be suffering."

"We had to deal harshly with him to arrest him."

"You see, he received some severe blows on the head, but he is all right now, as far as the hurts are concerned; only off here, you know," and the speaker tapped his head.

"You lie!"

"I am not crazy, though God knows it is strange that I have not been driven so."

The words were uttered in a deep voice, ending in a tone that was pathetic.

"When did you come here after this man?"

"Three weeks ago."

"From the East?"

"Yes."

"You came to get him to return with you?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He is mad, and escaped two years ago from the — Asylum."

"I am not mad, but I did escape from the asylum, where they put me to drive me crazy, and die."

"Don't mind him, for you hear how he talks."

"Why, he killed one of the keepers in making his escape."

"Yes, when the keeper sought to kill me, for they wanted me dead."

"I acted only in self-defense."

"Don't mind him, sir, for he is away off."

"But I do mind him; as any man is entitled to be heard."

"God bless you," moaned the Giant Miner.

"Who are you, anyway?" sharply said the detective who had done the most of the talking.

"I was just about to ask you that very question," said Buffalo Bill, quietly.

"We told you."

"We are New York detectives."

"You must have more than your word out here to back you up."

"We have."

"What have you?"

"I could say our revolvers, but as you look like one in

authority we are willing to show our papers, if you prove your right to demand them."

"I have the right, or I would not interfere with officers of the law, as you claim to be."

"Then tell us your authority, and we will meet you halfway."

"I am known out here as Buffalo Bill, but I am down upon the army roll at Fort Faraway as William F. Cody, chief of scouts."

"Buffalo Bill!"

The men uttered the name in a surprised tone, glanced at each other, and then one of them said:

"You have proof, I suppose, that you are the man you say you are?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"My word."

"That won't go with us."

"It must."

"I say it won't."

"Then I must give you further proof, as you force it upon me."

"Out with it, for we are not men to be trifled with or scared off from our duty by men in buckskin."

"Here is my proof."

"Hands up! both of you!"

Just how it was the two detectives did not fully understand.

They were only certain that a revolver covered each one of them, that a piercing eye glanced along the sights of each weapon, and they found themselves at the mercy of the man whose proof they had demanded that he had a right to question their acts.

CHAPTER VI.

PROOFS OF IDENTITY.

Caught completely off their guard, with the scout's revolvers covering them, and their manacled prisoner showing vigor and great nervousness, the two detectives readily showed a willingness to temporize, and one of them said:

"You are too quick with your weapons, mister."

"You refused to take my word."

"Well, if you say you are Buffalo Bill, I guess you are, for I think the way you draw and handle weapons is proof, from all I have heard of you."

"I am chief of scouts at the fort, and am more than willing to meet you halfway; but it is my duty to know who men are that venture into this wild land, and especially when they come here to take a man away against whom no unkind word has been uttered."

"Show me proof of your claim as secret service officers, and then we can talk, for I also wear the badge of a detective of the Rocky Mountain Police—see!" and the scout revealed a gold badge that he wore concealed from sight.

This was enough for the two detectives, and they at once offered their hands as comrades.

Then they also showed badges as New York detectives.

"Have you papers as well?" asked the scout.

"We have."

With this they showed official-looking papers that testified to their being employed by the superintendent of an Eastern insane asylum to hunt down and bring back with

them a certain dangerous lunatic, Morris Linton by name, and who, in making his escape, had killed a keeper.

The said Morris Linton was a giant in size, had been for years in the asylum referred to, and labored under the hallucination that he possessed a large fortune, of which certain parties were trying to rob him.

He had last been heard of in Omaha, and was then making his way to the far frontier.

Buffalo Bill read the papers carefully, noted the description of the man, and then said:

"Are you sure that this is your man?"

"We are."

"I make no denial of my name or identity, nor the charges against me," said the Giant Miner in a low tone.

"You confess then that you are the one these detectives seek?" asked the scout.

"Yes, Mr. Cody, I am Morris Linton, escaped from the — Asylum, and in making my escape I killed a keeper who was trying to kill me and thus get me out of the way, as I would not, in my despair, take my own life, or die a natural death."

"How did you track him here?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"We stopped at every stage station and made inquiries, showing his photograph and describing him, and a driver by the name of Left-Hand Larry told us such a man was gold-hunting back in the mountains from Stock-Tender Lone Sam's station.

"So we got off here. The stock-tender told us how to find our man, and we surprised him in his cabin, but we did not capture him without a severe struggle, in which he was somewhat injured."

"May I ask if there is a reward for him?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the amount?"

"I think it is several thousand."

"Do you not know?"

"It is five thousand," said one of the detectives, reluctantly.

"And all Lone Sam is interested, then, is in having shown you your man's retreat?"

"Yes, and he brought us provisions we had to send for."

"Well, gentlemen, in spite of your badges and official papers, I must say there are two sides to every question, and out here we have to be very particular.

"Lone Sam will be here within an hour or so, and in the meanwhile we will give up the cabin to your prisoner, and let him rest, for he seems weak, and to be suffering.

"Lie down on Sam's cot, my man, and rest quietly, and we will have a talk with you later and decide what is best to be done."

The two detectives evidently did not like this plan.

But they had had a sample of what Buffalo Bill would do if driven to it, and they agreed to leave it as the scout wished.

They saw that the man really was weak and suffering; he was ironed, and could escape only by the window or door, and they would take care to watch the outside of the cabin.

But there was a large price on the head of their man, all expenses were paid besides, and they had run him to earth and had no intention of losing him.

But something warned them not to go against Buffalo Bill.

Then, too, there was no coach eastward for days, and they could but submit with a good grace.

So the prisoner stretched himself upon the bed, the scout and the two ferrets left him alone, and going outside the cabin sat down to talk matters over.

It was the pair of detectives who did most of the talking, Buffalo Bill being an excellent listener, and they said all in their power to impress him with the strength of their case.

It was while they were talking that the scout's acute hearing caught the sound of hoofs approaching, and he said:

"Here comes Lone Sam now, and the coach westward has come at the same time."

CHAPTER VII.

THE GIANT MINER AT BAY.

The detectives had not heard the sound that had caught the ear of Buffalo Bill.

But they listened for a moment, and were about to say they could catch no sound, when the scout said:

"He will come in sight soon."

And in a minute more a horseman appeared, coming rapidly along the trail.

It was Lone Sam. He was followed by Nebraska Ned's coach.

He was surprised to see several forms before his cabin.

"Well, Sam, back again? I am glad to see you."

"Yes, sir."

"You met the coach?"

"Yes, sir, and all is well; but I have something to tell you, Chief Cody, when I have put my horse up. Ah! Here are the two detectives, I see, who came after the Giant Miner."

"Yes, and their prisoner is in the cabin, for they had hoped to catch the regular eastbound coach, but it doesn't pass here to-night."

"I am not sorry, for I hate to see that man taken back, for to me he doesn't seem crazy, and I have often talked with him; but, then, the law must have its way, I suppose."

"If in the right, but justice errs sometimes, Sam.

"You did not report the arrival of these detectives?"

"Yes, I wrote a note to the boss at Outfit City, but he sent no instructions."

Buffalo Bill then went out and had a talk with Nebraska Ned, who, after changing his horses, went on his way much cheered by the scout's assurances that all would be well in regard to the lost passenger.

Buffalo Bill then returned to the cabin.

He no longer held any suspicion that Lone Sam was in the pay of the detectives, and felt that his sympathies were with the Giant Miner.

"Well, Sam, these gentlemen captured their man, but not without having to hurt him, and he really does not seem able to stand the long journey," he said.

"I do not doubt their legal status in the matter; but out here a man cannot be treated unfairly, and we have not heard the other side."

"There is no other side when the fellow is an escaped lunatic," said one of the detectives.

"That may or may not be.

"I shall hear his story, and then, assured if he is really mad, and hence dangerous, you will be allowed to take him, as you desire.

"But we have never suspected his sanity, and he may have a story to tell also.

"I have regarded him as a man with a history—one who had had his whims, and nothing more.

"I have a duty to attend to that may carry me off at any moment; so put your horses in the corral, Sam, and we will go in and have a talk with the prisoner."

"I do not see by what right you override our authority, sir, to take an escaped lunatic and a murderer," said one of the detectives, harshly.

"I do so from a sense of justice.

"I do not go against your authority, but I do intend to hear his side of the story, for I know of cruel crimes that have been perpetrated against sane people who were said to be mad, and, though you are acting in the discharge of duty, those who sent you may have some ax to grind."

"Nothing of the kind.

"All is open and above board."

"Gentlemen, we will hear the story of the accused man."

"And you will take his word against ours?" hotly asked one of the detectives.

"That depends upon the story, how it is told, and my own convictions in the matter."

"And suppose you side against us?"

"Then he shall remain here and have time and opportunity to get his proof," was the determined reply.

"That means that he will be allowed to escape and we will have all our work to do over."

"It means that he will be kept securely at the fort until it is decided whether his story is false and yours true.

"Come, Sam, we will all go in now, for I have a matter on hand that cannot be neglected."

So into the cabin went the scout, Lone Sam and the two detectives.

Buffalo Bill was in advance, Lone Sam next to him, and the two ferrets had hung back for a word together.

But as they appeared in the door the large form of the Giant Miner suddenly rose from the bed, towering even above Buffalo Bill, and he bent forward as though about to make a spring upon the party.

The detectives uttered a cry as they suddenly beheld him, and one of them called out in alarm:

"See! he has freed himself of his irons."

"Yes, and has secured weapons in some way.

"Look out!" cried the other.

It did appear then as though the Giant Miner was really mad.

He had indeed broken the slender steel manacles from his wrists, and in some way had become possessed of Lone Sam's extra pair of revolvers hanging in the cabin.

The Giant Miner seemed about to fight for his life as he said in a low tone:

"You cannot take me alive.

"I will not go back to that hell on earth."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCOUT'S DECISION.

That the Giant Miner was at bay and meant what he said there was not the shadow of a doubt.

But though the detectives shrank back, Buffalo Bill and Lone Sam held their places.

The eyes of the scout were upon the man, though he made no effort to draw a weapon. What might have happened who could tell had Buffalo Bill's nerve failed him.

But it did not, and keeping his eyes upon the miner, he said, calmly:

"Come, pard, lay aside those weapons, for I have come to hear your story and see that justice is done you."

"Buffalo Bill, did other man than you say that to me I would fling the lie in his teeth, for no one has ever been just to me.

"I am the victim of a cruel plot, and I would die before I again submit to what I have suffered.

"But, as you tell me that justice will be shown me, I believe you, and I show my trust by submitting to you."

With the words the giant madman suddenly stepped toward Buffalo Bill and gave up his revolvers.

"You see, gentlemen, that this man means to act squarely."

"Madmen are always tricky," said one of the ferrets.

"He's got some game to spring on us," said the other.

"Now, with Chief Cody, I believe in his honesty of purpose," Lone Sam remarked.

"I thank you.

"I do mean to be square; but I wish to say that those men are to be well-paid for capturing me, and so do not wish you to hear but one side.

"You have said that you will hear my story?"

"We will.

"Sit down and tell it to us."

"I cannot sit down. I am too nervous.

"I was left here, as you know, and supposed you had left me to my fate.

"So I broke these manacles, as I am a giant in strength as well as size.

"I intended to kill those men in self-defense.

"But to my story, Mr. Cody.

"I am a creature of unfortunate circumstances, from being born the heir to a fortune.

"There were other heirs, I being third on the list.

"But I was making a good living as a rancher in Texas, and was content.

"But lawyers hunted me out and showed me that the two heirs before me had died, one, it is said, taking his own life, the other being killed by highwaymen who sought to rob him, and nothing was between me and a million dollars.

"Of course, I was glad to hear the good news, and went North to claim it.

"But I had an anonymous letter sent to my hotel telling me that the two heirs before me had been foully dealt with; that the first one was not a suicide, but had been poisoned; the other had been killed, but by men paid to get him out of the way, and to be on guard or I would share the same fate.

"I at once denounced the affair to my lawyer, telling him to find out who would be benefited by my death, as they were the ones who had committed the two murders.

"That lawyer, I will swear, was in the pay of the heirs to get the fortune in case of my death.

"The lawyer came to me and said that he had found

out about the anonymous letter, and would take me to the writer, who was in an asylum.

"I went with him, and that day began my persecution, for I was incarcerated in the asylum as a madman.

"I am sure the superintendent was in the pay of the man to inherit my fortune, for but for my great endurance, watchfulness, and a dread of being poisoned, I would have been killed.

"I at last found my chance, and made my escape.

"In doing so I distinctly heard the command of the superintendent:

"He must never escape.

"Kill him! Shoot him!"

"I sprang upon the keeper, to struggle for the revolver he had, and which he tried to use.

"In the struggle the weapon was fired and the keeper dropped dead.

"I escaped, and, having some money I had kept concealed all the while, I made my way West.

"I was fearful of arrest and the consequences; so I came here to hunt for gold, hoping to get enough to go far from here and then begin suit for what was my own, and punish my foes.

"I had laid up a snug little sum—but these men appeared, and, professing friendship, they unexpectedly attacked me, dealing me stunning blows, as though to kill me.

"But they did not kill me, and but for you I would have been taken back to that asylum, and there I would have died.

"That is my story, Mr. Cody, and I leave it for you to decide as to its being false or true."

"My mind is clear as to that," said Buffalo Bill.

"And your decision, sir?" asked one of the detectives.

"Is that this man has told the truth, and I shall have to hold you two men as kidnapers, in the plot against him, until it can be found out whether you are guilty or not, and letters be sent East to get at the bottom facts and the plotters arrested for their crime."

"A just decision, Chief Cody!" cried Lone Sam, earnestly, while the Giant Miner uttered a low and fervent:

"Thank God! Justice at last!"

CHAPTER IX.

A TURN ABOUT FAIR PLAY.

At the decision of Buffalo Bill the two detectives were considerably taken aback.

They looked at each other in a strange way, and then one of them said:

"In doing what you call justice to this man you are very unjust to us, and you will have to answer."

"I mean to be just; but have you been?"

"You came upon the trail of this man like bloodhounds.

"If his mind is diseased, it is a visitation of misfortune that he is not responsible for, and should win sympathy, not cruelty.

"You doubtless know more of the facts than you admit, and came prepared to take him back, dead or alive.

"Though he did not know you, you accepted his hospitality and sprang upon him, and his wounds show the way in which you dealt with him.

"You came out here where military law rules, and did not go to the officer in command to explain your business

and show your authority; but you tried to kidnap the man and take him back secretly.

"I have heard your story and his.

"The evidence is against you, and you are nothing but lawbreakers, and must submit to detention until this man has a chance to prove his case.

"Lone Sam, I shall place these men in your keeping to take to the fort, and you can explain all to Colonel Duncan, and just what I have done in the matter."

"I will, sir."

"The colonel will doubtless hold these men until this man has a chance to have his case investigated, for to let them free would be to give warning to the lawyer and asylum authorities to escape the punishment they deserve."

"And in holding us, what will you do with this mad man?" asked one of the detectives, while the other said:

"Yes; you will give him a chance to escape, I suppose?"

Before Buffalo Bill could reply, the Giant Miner said:

"I am willing to go to the fort also, and to remain under confinement until the colonel investigates my story."

"You see that this man is willing to meet you halfway.

"He can go to the fort and report to Colonel Duncan, the new commandant, leaving it to him to decide what is best."

"Then I will accompany Lone Sam and these men.

"But I would like to go by my cabin first, for I have hidden there all my proofs.

"Before I was taken to the asylum I left with a lawyer all my papers, letters and other things of importance.

"When I escaped I wrote for them and they were sent to me, and I have kept them in hiding."

"You must get them and then go on to the fort, for they will be important.

"Now, Sam, as turn about is fair play, I will leave these men under the guard of the miner, while I have a talk with you, for dawn is at hand, I see."

The detectives swore, but it did no good, and the scout and the stock-tender walked apart for a talk.

Buffalo Bill, in spite of his calm demeanor, had grown more and more anxious regarding the California coach.

Its not coming seemed to assure him that it had been held up further along the trail than he had supposed the road agents to be stationed.

Had any accident occurred to the coach, causing delay?

So why had not the driver come on to the station to seek Lone Sam's aid?

All these questions, which he could not answer, worried Buffalo Bill greatly.

So he decided to tell Lone Sam the story and hear what he had to say.

He felt that he could trust the stock-tender implicitly.

"Sam, I have something to tell you," he said, as the two walked away from the cabin, leaving the Giant Miner seated on a bench, watching the two detectives.

The latter had been disarmed by Buffalo Bill, but the miner had a revolver.

The detectives were wholly free otherwise, Buffalo Bill desiring to treat them as well as they would allow him to.

Disappearing behind some pinon trees, Buffalo Bill and Lone Sam had halted.

Though not seen by those at the cabin, they could see the three men there, and while talking kept their eyes upon them.

The scout had confidence in the miner, yet he was determined to be on the safe side.

When they had halted, Buffalo Bill went on to say:

"Now, Sam, first of all, I will say that I am sure it was a game to get rid of that miner, and I believe his story implicitly."

"As I do, and it looks as though they had intended to kill him, for money will make some men do any crime."

CHAPTER X.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

Lone Sam went on to tell his story of coming up with Nebraska Ned's coach, the flight of the robbers, and just what the driver had told him.

"There were four at least, Ned felt confident," Lone Sam continued.

"They also knew that he had a lady passenger on the coach, or had had."

"They knew this?" asked Buffalo Bill in surprise.

"Yes, sir."

"Indeed?"

"This is what I was anxious to tell you, that the Mounted Sharps knew of Ned's having a lady passenger along."

"Well, Sam, I am glad to be thoroughly posted as to their doings. It is most important that I should be, as you will understand when you hear what I have to tell you, for I am going to ask your aid. And Nebraska Ned was so excited when I talked to him outside the cabin that he could give me little information."

"I am at your service for life or death, Chief Cody," was the fervent response.

"I well know that, Sam."

"But what I tell you is a secret, known only to Captain Lloyd Winter, or at least supposed to be, and I tell you frankly I am out on the trail now for big game."

"Somehow I half suspected that you were playing a bold hand and some waiting game."

"It is just this, Sam:

"There have been so many, and such daring attacks upon the Overland coaches and the pony riders for the past six months that Captain Winter began to feel certain that the Mounted Sharps must have spies very close to him."

"The truth came out when he began to watch the hold-ups, that coaches and pony riders bearing no treasure went through unmolested."

"That was sure proof of an outlaw spy system."

"Yes."

"And coaches with passengers who had money were halted, while those who carried people, though supposed to be poor, never saw a road agent."

"Is that so?"

"It is."

"And it caused Captain Winter to send for me."

"The colonel told me what was wanted of me, and I at once volunteered to go."

"Of course you would."

"It's that kind of a bold game you like to play, Chief Cody."

"The colonel told me to take what scouts of my company I wished and to call upon him for any number of soldiers."

"That was liberal."

"Yes; but I refused all."

"Refused help?"

"Yes."

"But why?"

"If the outlaws have the spys they are suspected of having, they would at once know that a hunt was to be begun."

"True."

"That would drive them all off the trails, all would be quiet, and when the hunt had ended they would begin their old crimes again."

"You are right."

"So I decided simply to play a lone hand."

"And a bold one."

"Well, I am playing it now, but I have come to a point where I need aid, and you are the man to help me, Lone Sam."

"And I am the man that will do it," was the prompt response of the stock-tender.

When Lone Sam said what he did he held out his hand and the scout warmly grasped it.

He knew that in the stock-tender he had a friend in need, and he was just then in sad need of an ally.

Then Buffalo Bill went on to tell about the coach coming through from California and that it was driven by Lige Lumley, a good man and true, and whom they both knew.

"Now, it is said that these Californians carry a large fortune with them, and it is most foolish for them to do so, but as they have taken the risk we must do all in our power to protect them, if not too late, for let me tell you that the coach was due here last night."

Lone Sam listened with deepest attention to all the scout said, and then the two arranged what they thought best to be done and returned to the cabin.

Then Lone Sam set to work to get breakfast, and this over he mounted the two detectives and the miner upon the Overland Company's horses, and rode off with them toward the fort.

The detectives seemed most crestfallen at their failure to accomplish their mission, and one of them boldly informed the scout that when Colonel Duncan heard their story he would reverse the decision against them.

"It is for him to do so, gentlemen; but I have simply done my duty as I saw it."

"Don't forget, Sam, to go by the miner's cabin with him."

"No, I will go there first," and the four rode off, the miner leading the way, the detectives following side by side, and Lone Sam bringing up the rear.

Buffalo Bill saw them depart, then locked up the cabin, and, mounting his horse, rode up the trail.

He came to the trail leading to Fort Faraway, and instantly halted.

There was a separate trail from the one made by the regular coach that caught his eye.

"That settles it, for the Californians did turn to Fort Faraway, and more, they came back again."

"I must look for the coach between here and Lone

Sam's cabin, for, not expecting that it had come this far, I did not search the trail as I came along.

"Now, where can that coach have disappeared?"

"It certainly could not have passed Lone Sam's cabin, unless it went by without stopping, and at a very slow pace, for I heard not the slightest sound.

"If the coach did go by, then the road agents had captured it and then sneaked by.

"The road agents had doubtless run it off the trail somewhere to rob it nearer their retreat."

Thus mused the scout for some minutes.

But, being convinced that the extra coach had certainly been in to Fort Faraway, and returned on its eastward run, he mounted his horse and started back over the trail to Lone Sam's cabin, watching every foot of the way as he rode slowly along.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTERY OF A NIGHT.

The sun was a couple of hours above the horizon when Buffalo Bill made the discovery that the California coach had certainly been following Nebraska Ned, and had gotten as far on his way as the turn-off from the fort trail.

It had gone in there to the fort for some reason, known best to Lige Lumley, the driver.

It had come out again, and there were the tracks leading along the main Overland trail and toward Outfit City.

But where was the coach?

Had the Californians been left at the fort, where the coaches passed each way only once in five days, it was easy to see the tracks they left.

Worried at the mysterious disappearance of the California coach in the night, Buffalo Bill kept on its trail toward Lone Sam's cabin.

He knew that Lone Sam and his party were even then at the Giant Miner's cabin.

The last was some half a dozen miles back of Lone Sam's cabin, and one could cut across there from the fort.

If they had reached there on time, then Lone Sam would not be long in returning, the scout felt assured.

As he rode along, Buffalo Bill saw the trails of the three coaches plainly marked.

There was Left-Hand Larry's trail to the fort.

He was the driver of the regular coach to Fort Faraway.

Then there was the trail of Nebraska Ned's coach.

Last, and queerest of all, was the trail of the extra coach.

Looking well at this, Buffalo Bill's experienced eye saw that Lige Lumley had been driving fast.

The coach had gone along at a much more rattling pace than had Left-Hand Larry's and Nebraska Ned's.

Quickening his pace, for each moment he grew more and more anxious, Buffalo Bill at last came to a broad, shallow stream that the trail crossed.

It was in a hole, densely timbered, and the sun did not even penetrate there at noonday.

Giving his horse a few swallows of water, the scout rode on.

The brook was not over two miles from Lone Sam's cabin.

That proved that the California coach had certainly gotten that far on its way to Outfit City.

The scout felt deeply chagrined.

He condemned himself, for he had allowed the extra coach to get by him in some way.

But if so it had not halted at Lone Sam's cabin.

But why had it passed without getting fresh horses?

Perhaps Lige had changed horses at the fort, for there was a corral of stage animals kept there, in case of need, though a change was not frequently made at that point.

But that must be the excuse for Lige Lumley not stopping at Lone Sam's in the night.

He had passed right on by.

If he had, and the scout felt that he could have done nothing else, why the road agents had held him up and the Californians had been robbed.

In that case there was nothing to be done save track the band of Mounted Sharps to their retreat, and get the treasure back if possible.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE LOST COACH.

The scout returned to Lone Sam's cabin, and after dinner, mounted upon two good animals, Buffalo Bill and Lone Sam started out in search of the lost coach.

Going directly to the brook that crossed the trail, the track of the California extra was seen plainly to have entered the stream.

Down the bank of the brook they rode one on either side to note if the coach had left the water, and they rode rapidly along, for it was the scout's desire to get along as far as possible before nightfall, when, while he went into camp, Lone Sam would have to return to his cabin and look after the horses, but come back the next day.

But Buffalo Bill hoped to find some trace of the coach before night came on.

He knew that the brook they were following flowed into a larger stream in the valley through which ran the trail he intended to have taken the coach of the Californians.

Whether the bed of the stream allowed of the coach to drive all the way along it, keeping in the water, he did not know, but if it left the brook on either side one of them must discover the fact.

After many miles had been gone over, Lone Sam called over from his side: "Maybe it was Lige Lumley that took to the stream, pard, intending to reach the valley trail by this way."

"Perhaps, but I hardly believe it."

"He might have feared going by the trail that branched off, as his tracks could have been plainly seen by the outlaws."

"I hope that it was so, Sam."

And so they rode on.

The country, as they descended from the mountains, grew wilder, and canyons appeared here and there on either side, but when their way was obstructed one or the other would turn into the stream, the bed of which could still be followed only in places, it being rough for the coach.

Going with the stream, which flowed rapidly, it would have been easy traveling for the coach team, but terribly hard if faced against the current.

At last Buffalo Bill came to a halt.

The river that was in the valley was but a mile or two beyond, and there the smaller stream entered it.

But the latter was becoming impassable for a coach along its bed, and when the scout had drawn rein there was a deep wash that barred his way.

But down in the depths of the ravine he saw the trail of the coach.

It had left the brook there.

The one who drove it knew that he could follow the bed of the stream no further.

"Come over, Sam."

The stock-tender heard the scout's call and plunged into the stream.

"Come out in the ravine here and follow it to its head."

"Ay, ay," answered Lone Sam, and, as he reached the bank, where the ravine, in rainy weather, sent a small creek into the stream, he called out:

"Here is the coach trail."

"Yes, follow it up, for I cannot get down there."

Half a mile back from the stream Lone Sam came out at the head of the ravine.

Buffalo Bill met him there.

There was the trail of the lost coach, and it led away across the valley toward the river, a mile away.

Instantly the two pards began to follow it at a gallop.

As they neared the river they could see that the banks were high and steep, and it would be a long distance down to the water.

The trail Buffalo Bill had intended to take the coach crossed the river miles above where it was fordable, and ran down the valley upon the other side.

How had the driver of the coach gotten it across, for rugged work it would have been to go down on that side of the stream both men saw.

But there led the trail straight toward the river bank.

Would they find it there, hidden in some ravine?

Night was not far off, they had come twenty miles from the cabin, and they would not have much longer to work. So they still further quickened their pace.

Drawing nearer the river, they saw where the coach had been brought to a halt.

There were tracks all about it, the footprints of men and horses.

The ground was of such a nature that the tracks were all plainly visible.

Then the coach had been driven on again.

The tracks showed that the horses had been put to a rapid pace.

What could it mean, with the river cliffs only a short distance ahead?

Then the ground grew harder, the tracks were hardly visible at all, but the trail led straight to the cliffs.

Soon the ground grew of too flinty a nature to reveal any trail.

But the two trailers held on.

They drew their horses to a slower pace as they neared the cliffs.

Nearer and nearer they came, until the edge was just before them, and they could see that the bank went off sheer two hundred feet to the river below.

Halting near the edge, they sprang from their horses and looked over.

Standing on the very edge, they looked over, and Buffalo Bill called out:

"There is the coach!"

CHAPTER XIII.

AS BUFFALO BILL SAW IT.

The two men stood in silence upon the edge of the cliff, gazing down at the depth far below them.

The cliffs were far part, the river running near the left bank, and upon the rocks under where Buffalo Bill and Lone Sam stood were the horses and the coach.

They had found the lost coach.

But it seemed terrible to behold it as it was.

Shattered to atoms, and with the horses dead, it was a pitiable sight.

At last Lone Sam spoke, breaking the silence that had lasted for moments.

"What a fate to meet; for I guess they all went over together."

"Why?"

"My idea is that Lige Lumley, poor fellow, tried to save his passengers and their treasure, to throw the road agents off his trail."

"Well?"

"So he took to the brook, and when he got to where he believed his trail would not be seen, he turned out on the plateau and pushed ahead rapidly.

"And drove over the cliff?"

"Yes."

"In the darkness?"

"Just so."

"That would be all right, Sam, but for two or three things."

"What are they?"

"We saw where the coach had left the brook."

"Yes."

"Now, those coach horses would not have gone over this cliff in the darkest night, their instinct would have warned them of danger, could they not have seen?"

"But there they are."

"Yes; and I'll wager big money that they were blind-folded, muzzled, put at a rush, and thus sent over."

"Oh, Lord!"

"If not, they were brought here and forced over, the coach being rolled after them."

"Then you do not think any one went over with the coach?"

"No, indeed."

"You believe the Mounted Sharps did it?"

"Yes, of course."

"But why?"

"They had in the coach an elephant on their hands."

"They wished to get rid of it, to hide it, so that they could not be traced by it, and so they took to the brook and brought it here."

"You are on the right trail, I guess, Pard Cody."

"I may be wrong, but I think it as I see it all."

"You see, they thought the horses and coach, falling from this height, would roll into the river."

"But they did not by a dozen or more feet."

"No."

"Had they done so the current would have swept them away and all trace would have been lost of them."

"And they either did not look over to see the result, or could not get down to remedy it."

"No."

"And the people?"

"The outlaws have taken them to their retreat, and I am glad of it."

"Glad of it?"

"They are holding them for a ransom, together with Miss Insley, not content with what they found in the coach."

"I see."

"Had they been satisfied, they would have skipped off and left their victims and that would have been the end of them."

"But as they have held the people prisoners, it means that they intend to stay until they get more money from them."

"So we can hunt them down."

"Just that."

"Well, you have read the whole story like an open book, Chief Cody."

"It is as I see it."

"But now I will go in search of a camp, we will have supper, and then you can start back for your cabin, while I look up a place where I can go over the cliff."

"You will remain at your cabin until after midnight, to pasture your horses, but then corral them again and start here, coming at a pace that will get you here by dawn, when I will have breakfast ready for you, and then we can go to work, for I wish you to bring back half a dozen extra horses with you."

"I'll do it," said Lone Sam, who now saw Buffalo Bill's plan.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOUND.

Buffalo Bill found a camping place a mile back from the cliffs, where there was a little brook, wood, and grass, and, after supper, he saw Lone Sam start upon his return for his cabin, while he went off on foot to reconnoiter for a good place to descend to the river bed the following morning.

He still had half an hour of daylight, and hoped to find some break in the cliff, or tree to which a line could be attached for his descent.

But darkness came on, and as far as he could see in either direction the cliff remained unbroken and he could not find a tree or boulder near its edges to which to attach the lariats.

Returning to his lone camp through the darkness, he turned in at once, for the night before he had had no rest.

Trained to awaken when he desired to, he arose an hour before dawn, placed his horse in a fresh grazing ground, built a fire and had breakfast ready just as he heard the sound of hoofs.

"On time, Pard Sam," he called out, as the stock-tender dismounted.

"Yes, and you are also."

"All goes well at the cabin?"

"Yes, and I had a good rest. The horses were nearly all night in the pasture, so they can stand it until my return to-night, for to-morrow is pony-riders' day."

"Yes, but we have to-day before us, and must make some discovery."

"I hope so."

The two ate their breakfast, and then Buffalo Bill said:

"There is not a tree or rock on the cliffs to tie a lariat to, so I must make my horse do duty as holder."

"You brought the lariats?"

"Yes, seven of them, besides my own, and we have yours and the stake ropes."

Together they went over to the cliff, leading Buffalo Bill's horse, saddled and bridled, while the animal belonging to Lone Sam was left to graze and rest after his rapid gallop of over twenty miles.

They halted near where the coach had gone over, and the horse was placed in position, the lariats tied together and then doubled.

One end was then made fast to the saddle horn, a blanket placed over the edge of the cliff to prevent the line from wearing and the other end thrown over.

It fell to the rocks below with a few feet to spare.

Divesting himself of his boots, coat and weapons, Buffalo Bill said:

"Lone Sam, this is the only way to get down there, except for those vultures."

"I guess so."

"I know so, for see, there is not a coyote there after those dead horses, and this proves nothing can get down the cliff anywhere."

"You are right."

"But I had not thought of that, Pard Cody."

"Now I will hold the horse."

This Lone Sam did, while Buffalo Bill swung himself over the cliff on the line, as fearlessly as a sailor would have done.

He went down rapidly hand over hand, pausing at loops tied here and there, for a rest, and soon Lone Sam no longer felt the strain upon the line.

Then he walked to the edge of the cliff and saw Buffalo Bill examining the shattered coach.

"There is no one there?"

"Not a soul."

After a moment Buffalo Bill called up:

"The cushions of the coach are gone."

Then came:

"There is not a thing of value about the coach."

A moment after:

"The lanterns of the coach were removed."

Then, from time to time, as discoveries about the coach were made, came the information:

"There were six horses to the coach, as the trail showed, but only four are here."

"Two were kept."

"The horses were blindfolded and muzzled to send them over."

"The reins and traces were taken off the harness, for use some other time."

"No baggage is in the coach."

"I have found a lady's handkerchief."

"It has the initials 'L. I.'"

Soon after came the words:

"I am coming up."

"I can find nothing more."

Lone Sam ran to the horse, and then came the strain upon the rope.

The scout had begun the hard climb.

And it was a hard climb of two hundred feet, but, with rests here and there at the loops, was made in safety.

Lone Sam grasped the hand of the bold climber as he saw him appear above the cliff, and said:

"Well, now to follow the trail of the outlaws, I suppose?"

"Yes, back from where we saw those tracks."

"You are more certain than ever about the outlaws having robbed the coach?"

"Yes, for there is not a vestige of anything left in the coach; in fact, it was robbed of everything the outlaws thought they might find use for.

"Now we will break up camp and take the trail of the Mounted Sharps and their victims."

And this they did.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CALIFORNIANS.

Along the Overland stage trail, upon the afternoon of the day of Buffalo Bill's conversation with Lloyd Winter at Outfit City, a large and comfortable coach was rolling along, drawn by a team of six good horses. This was the extra California coach, sent through to carry Mr. Lee Insley, the wealthy Californian.

Upon the box sat a man of athletic build, cool, decided face, and with long hair and drooping mustache.

He was dressed in frontier garb, wore a broad sombrero, and, in addition to a belt of arms, had a rifle swung along the box seat.

On the top of the coach were a couple of saddles and bridles, one of them for a lady, and there was a tent rolled up and a camping outfit.

Within the coach there were three persons.

The one on the back seat was a gentleman of middle age, with dark, handsome face, and dressed in a traveling suit.

The two upon the front seat were a man who looked to be a Mexican and a pretty woman, his wife, and who had the same dark eyes, hair and complexion of her husband, showing that they were of the same nationality.

Lige Lumley brought the extra into the fort in good time. Nebraska Ned and a fresh team were secured there, while the Californians got out, had a talk with an officer and some heavy satchels were taken out from under the rear seat and left at the post.

Then the coach rolled on its way once more.

Mr. Lee Insley did not take advantage of the coach being at a standstill to sleep.

He mounted the box with Lige Lumley, the horses were started up, and Sanchez and Anita, the Mexican servants, were told to take full possession of the coach and make themselves as comfortable as possible during the night.

As they drove along the conversation turned upon Buffalo Bill, and they were going at a good pace when Lige suddenly drew rein.

"What is it, driver?"

"I hear hoofs ahead, and they is comin' ag'in."

"I hear them."

"They is comin' from behind, not in front of us."

"Yes; some one from the fort, perhaps."

"Maybe."

"But I'll feel better when I knows, though he don't seem ter be in hidin' himself."

"No, he comes rapidly along."

Soon after the form of a horseman was seen in the darkness, and in a minute more he dashed alongside and called out:

"Ho, Pard Lige, how are you?"

"All right, but I don't jist place yer—yes, yer is Buffalo Bill."

"Yes, the cold I have changes my voice."

"I heard you were driving an extra, and so came after to see if I might not be of some service, for I am told you have a rich freight along."

"Bless yer, old pard, it's jist like yer."

"I axed fer yer when I was at ther fort, and they said as how yer were out on their trail toward Outfit City."

"Yes; I has a gent along, and two servant folks."

"Mister Insley, this are Buffalo Bill, ther great scout of ther wild West, and of whom we were jist talking."

"I am indeed glad to meet you, sir, for I have heard much of you," said Mr. Insley, warmly, while Buffalo Bill raised his sombrero and replied, courteously, adding:

"I am sorry you are taking treasure through, Mr. Insley, as I have been informed you are by letter, and told to have a watch on you."

"Yes, I made a mistake, I frankly admit."

"I was too stubborn, and would not take advice; in fact, had no idea that we would be robbed."

"As, sir, you do not, indeed, know this Overland trail."

"The Mounted Sharps are thick in this vicinity, and, I fear, know that you carry a rich freight; in fact, I am led to believe, a large fortune in gold, gems and paper money."

"It is true, sir, I was so foolish as to carry so much; but, by the advice of our good friend Lumley here, I left about half the coin with the paymaster at the fort, in fact, all that we could get at, for the remainder is fastened up in a secret panel of the coach."

"But your paper money, sir, and gems?" quickly asked Buffalo Bill.

"That also my good friend here provided for the safety of, and he and my daughter entered into a plot to save it."

"Indeed!"

"But how was that possible, Pard Lumley?"

"By outwitting ther sharps by sending their young lady and her riches ahead in Nebraska Ned's coach."

"We just took cross cut trails, got to ther cabin, and there she caught Ned's old hearse, while I came back ter drive on serene in this."

"I tell yer, Buffalo Bill, we jist win this game on ther Mounted Sharps this time, ha! ha! ha!" and Lige laughed so heartily that it was contagious, the Californian joining in, then Buffalo Bill.

Then the latter said:

"You have indeed played trumps, Lige, and will beat the sharps on this run; but then you still have some gold aboard, as Mr. Insley says, and you don't wish to lose that, so I will ride well ahead, and see if there is any ambush ready."

"I will see you later," and with this Buffalo Bill rode

on ahead at a rapid gallop, while Lige Lumley said with enthusiasm:

"That's ther man, Mr. Insley, and with him along we has nothing to be afraid of now."

"God grant it," was the fervent reply of the Californian.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHERE WAS BUFFALO BILL?

For some reason the scout rode very rapidly after leaving the coach.

The driver and Mr. Insley listened to the rapid clatter of the hoofs, until they could be no longer heard, and then the former said:

"Does yer know what I thinks, Mr. Insley?"

"I confess that I do not, Lumley."

"Well, it's just this:

"This coach might be thoroughly searched and nothing found of much value."

"Yes."

"Well, we told him about ther young lady goin' on ahead in Nebraska Ned's coach, and having lots of boodle along with her."

"Yes."

"Now I thinks he don't want her scared, and more particular robbed, and he's just a makin' after Nebraska Ned ter be on hand if ther is trouble and chip inter ther game himself."

"I sincerely hope so."

"I know it, from ther way he rides."

"He didn't want us ter think he'd give us ther go by, but he wasn't goin' ter see ther young leddy suffer from scare, and he'll be thar near by when wanted."

"Buffalo Bill is a noble fellow."

"You kin gamble on it he is, mister."

"He's a man ter tie to in a tight place."

"And you think if we get through to-night we will be all safe."

"Sich is ther chances, after yer leave Outfit City, though the trail is a bad one for outlaws clean past Good-Luck Camp."

"There must be a large band of these lawless fellows, to patrol such a long stretch of country as they do."

"There is plenty of 'em ter ther work."

"There is men as has been gents in their time, and Captain Coolhand is one of 'em."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know fer sartin, but they say he were once a rich man, and kilt somebody, hevin' ter come West, and, as he didn't know how ter work, he began ter git another fortin by killing and robbin'."

"He don't scare a little bit, rides like ther devil on horseback, can match Buffalo Bill in shootin' a gun or revolver, and he's got his men under his control like they was regular soldiers."

"I tell yer, he is a bad man from Bitter Creek, and I will be mighty glad when he runs agin a snag, and my idee is thet Buffalo Bill is thet man, 'cause its got ter come if he keeps up his redhand work."

"Has he killed many people?"

"He has, fer he don't stand no nonsense, shootin' quick and dead straight when he wants ter show he ain't doin' ther robbin' act jist fer fun."

Thus the driver talked on, Mr. Insley deeply interested

the while, and the miles were put behind the coach as the night wore on.

At last the driver drew rein to give his horses water in a broad, shallow stream they were crossing, and he said: "Now, we'll soon be at Lone Sam's cabin, and then I'll find out about yer darter going on with Nebraska Ned, and if he seen Buffalo Bill go by."

"I shall feel easier in my mind then, and——"

The Californian stopped short, for suddenly out of the darkness ahead, from a thicket on the bank of the brook, came a command:

"Hands up, both of you!"

"Look behind you, and see that you are covered!"

Mr. Insley started at the voice, while a cry came from within the coach, as Anita, the Mexican girl, heard the stern command.

As for Lige Lumley, he took things coolly, and quickly raised his hands, saying:

"You do what they says; don't be slow!"

"But——"

"Look behind you!"

Lee Insley did so. What he saw was a form crouching upon the top of the coach, and leaning over the rolls of luggage, having his hands thrust forward and a revolver in each one.

"My Lord! it are a nigger."

"I pass," cried Lige Lumley, recognizing by the starlight that the man was a negro, or had face and hands blacked.

"Yes, massa, I is a nigger, and don't you go make me shoot yer, fer I knows ther cap'n," said the black highwayman in a low tone.

Up went the hands of Mr. Insley, and then Lige called out:

"Hands is up, so what does yer want, yer snarlin' coyote?"

"Booty," came the reply, in the voice which had just spoken.

Yer'll git none, fer we has played as sharp as you kin, sometimes."

"I know what you have and what you have not."

"I know how you played to win, but I always keep a few aces up my sleeve to play when wanted."

"Where is Buffalo Bill?" muttered Mr. Insley, his thoughts upon his daughter.

"Darkie Dick, disarm these men, make them enter the coach, and do you take the reins," came the order.

"Yes, massa cap'n," answered the negro, and to the driver and Mr. Insley he said:

"Yer must lay yer weepens down thar, on ther top of ther coach, gents, and crawl inter ther vehicle, fer I knows my business ef yer don't."

"We have got ter do it, sir, fer if we don't thar will be a funeral, as thar is plenty of 'em around in ther bushes."

"I shall be guided by you, Lumley," and Mr. Insley laid his belt of arms upon the top of the coach, the driver having done the same.

Then they swung themselves over the side and entered the coach, where Anita was trembling in terror and Sanchez was also badly scared.

"See here, nigger, does yer know how ter drive?" suddenly called out Lige Lumley, as the horses began to move.

"I'll attend to that, Lige Lumley," shouted the voice from the bank, followed by the words, called across the stream:

"Upon the other side, then!

"Follow down the stream with the coach.

"Now, Darkie Dick, you know what to do," and the heads of the horses were turned down the stream.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MAN IN MASK.

That the outlaws had taken possession of his coach and passengers was a surprise to Lige Lumley.

He could not understand it.

He saw that with the negro driving down the bed of the stream, the outlaws following on horseback, there was an intention to cover up the trail.

This he could not see through.

Why should they kidnap the coach and all.

But he consoled himself with the thought that Lola Insley was safe, and the strange conduct of the outlaws made him fear for the lives of his passengers, and even himself.

At last he came to the conclusion that they believed the coach to be heavily loaded with gold, and not being able to carry it, they were determined to take it to their retreat as it was.

He had no idea that the coach could follow the bed of the brook, but it was certainly doing so, and the black driver he could not but admit was handling the reins skillfully.

Knowing that Mr. Insley and the two servants were looking to him for comfort, he felt keenly his inability to give them any.

"I am distressed about my daughter.

"She will arrive at Outfit City and be greatly distressed at our not coming," said the Californian.

"Well, there is one thing sartin."

"What is that, Lumley?"

"Buffalo Bill knows where he left us to-night, and you bet he kin foller us, ef they does leave no trail.

"He knows a coach hain't got no wings ter fly, and he'll track it to ther brook, and it's got to leave it sum-time—now, thet black nigger do drive fust-class on' no mistake; but jist ter think of a nigger fer a road agent."

Unheeding the comments on the negro, Mr. Insley asked:

"Do you think Buffalo Bill will come in search of us?"

"I'll gamble on it he do.

"Why, he'll meet yer darter, and then, as we don't turn up, he'll take ther trail."

"And with some hope of finding it?"

"Ef he takes a trail he goes to ther end of it, so don't yer worry a little bit, fer, if they don't git mad when they finds ther boodle gone, and shoot us all, we'll be all right."

Anita groaned at this kind of consolation, though Lige Lumley meant well enough.

"This creek ain't got no end to it," growled Lige, as mile after mile was gone over and the coach still followed down the bed of the stream.

At last the dawn began to brighten the eastern horizon, and Lige said:

"We'll see how many of 'em thar be now, fer day is coming."

Soon after the coach turned out of the stream into a ravine, as the early morning light revealed it to be, and, with much interest, those in the coach peered out of the windows to see their surroundings.

Reaching a plateau, by way of the ravine, the coach came to a halt, and then upon one side of the coach rode a Chinee.

"Oh, Lord.

"It's a heathen Chinee," said Lige Lumley.

Then up rode a horseman, clad in buckskin, but with a mask wholly concealing his face.

"Thet's right, trot out ther rest o' yer menagerie, fer I likes ter see 'em.

"A nigger on ther box, a Chinee on horseback, and a what-is-it who would get scared ef his face wasn't covered up—trot 'em out; trot 'em out," boldly said Lige Lumley.

"We are in need of no others to handle this outfit, Lumley.

"When more are waisted they will be on hand," said the masked horseman.

"Is you three all that tuk us in?"

"Yes."

"Ef I'd only hev know'd it, then thar would hev been a dead nigger, a Chinaman with his stump toes turned up, and a man about your size a lookin' fer somebody to buy him."

The man laughed, but replied:

"I am glad, then, that you did not know the fact.

"But, come, no nonsense, Lumley, or I'll have to leave you in the trail for the coyotes.

"You, sir, I feel sorry to have to put irons on, but you must submit, as also your man and this driver.

"The girl will not be found."

"Where will you take us?"

"I can answer no questions.

"Sing Low, get your irons ready and clasp them on."

"Allee ledly," said the Chinaman, and, with consummate skill and quickness he clasped steel manacles upon the wrists of Lige Lumley, who said:

"Ther first time in my life I ever wore 'em.

"But you jist wait fer Judgment day."

Mr. Insley made no comment, but quietly submitted, and Sanchez was also manacled.

"We must get rid of the coach, and that it may look like a runaway, four of the team must go with it," said the captain.

"You know what to do, Darkie Dick."

"It's a pity, massa."

"Do as I tell you."

"Yes, massa."

"I'll unearth that gold from its clever hiding place," and with the ax that Lige Lumley carried the body of the coach was mashed in and the hidden treasure revealed.

What followed Buffalo Bill and Lone Sam skillfully tracked out, as the reader has already seen in sending the coach and four horses over the cliff.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SEVERED MOUNTAIN.

It was with undisguised pain that the negro road agent obeyed the order of the masked leader to blindfold four of the stage-horses and rush them to their death.

He plainly showed that it was against his will.

The Chinnee showed no emotion, simply obeying his orders in silence and with dispatch. When the coach had been stripped of all that was valuable the negro mounted the box, the masked leader rode upon one side, the Chinnee upon the other, and the team was started in a run toward the cliff.

Once fairly started the negro slipped over the top of the coach to the ground, the two mounted men riding alongside and lashing the blindfolded horses.

Mr. Insley entreated, Anita begged, and Lige Lumley swore at the leader, all in a vain effort to have him spare the horses.

But he was obdurate. The terrific crash of coach and horses on the rocks below was sickening.

But the masked leader at once turned his attention to his prisoners and the gold, and baggage taken from the coach.

All was loaded upon the led horses and thus the party rode, and the trail was taken up across the plain, where no trail was left, so flinty was the soil.

This was kept up for miles, when they came to a broad and well-worn trail leading from the river to the mountains.

The trail evidently went to a break in the cliffs, where wild animals could go down for water, and it had been made by their feet, until it was worn deep in the ground.

Into this trail the leader turned, and started toward the mountains, greatly to Lige Lumley's delight, as he had feared he would cross the river.

Several miles away was a lofty spur, jutting out from the range in the far distance, along the ridge of which the driver knew ran the Overland trail.

The range he well knew was seamed by deep canyons on either side, and was heavily timbered.

It ran in a zigzag course, winding for fifty miles thus, and was known to the drivers as the Devil's Back-Bone.

It was along the Devil's Back-Bone that the mounted sharps had done most of their red deeds, for they knew it thoroughly, could cut from point to point, and always find retreats in which to hide from all pursuit.

The spur that branched off from the range was some miles in length, ending abruptly upon the plain.

Toward this spur the trail now led that the outlaws were following, and Lige saw as they went along that the numerous wild animals that followed it to the river for water and back to their range in the mountains, would soon blot out all traces of their horses' tracks.

He noted the nature of the ground as they went along, kept his eyes upon the spur they were approaching, and which ended abruptly upon the plain, and saw that bold cliffs rose high overhead, while the trail branched off to either side, as the animals went to the right, or the left, according to inclination to make the mountain range from which this spur came.

The paths either way were well worn, the tracks were fresh, showing that the wild animals sought the river

for water every day, or night, and then returned to their grazing lands in the range.

But the masked leader went neither to the right nor the left, for, watching for a plain where the soil was hardest, he turned out of the trail, heading straight for the cliff.

"Now what are he goin' agin that cliff fer?" muttered Lige Lumley.

As none of his party knew, they returned no answer, and the outlaws also remained silent.

Nearer and nearer they drew to the spur, and the leader was right up against it, but still riding on, Lige Lumley watching him with greatest interest.

Then, to the surprise of the driver, the masked leader turned suddenly to the left and disappeared.

"Well, who would hev thought thar were a hole in that cliff," muttered Lumley.

But it was not a hole, a mere rent in the lower rocks, not visible ten feet away.

And into this narrow chasm, in single file, the others followed the masked outlaw, while Lige continually commented upon the strange entrance to the spur, and chuckled to himself over having found the way to the retreat of the mounted sharps, which thus far had baffled every one.

What good it would do him to know as a prisoner he did not take into consideration.

As the trail went on it gradually ascended, and, pursuing this rent, or chasm, after a quarter of a mile's climb, the leader was again seen to disappear, he being some fifty feet in advance of the others.

When Lige Lumley reached the spot where he had last seen the masked outlaws, he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

And no wonder, for what he beheld was a long, narrow valley in the very center of the spur.

It was fertile, heavily timbered, and here and there were lakes in it.

It was a revelation to the driver, for he saw how completely hidden was this valley in the center of a severed mountain.

They entered it through a narrow gateway of rock, a chasm, where there had been built a barrier of bars.

Beyond was the beautiful little valley, and in the meadows were feeding a number of horses.

It could be nothing else than the secret home of the outlaws.

CHAPTER XIX.

STRANGE REFUSAL.

The arrival and departure of the coaches and the coming and going of the pony-riders was quite an important event at Fort Faraway, the nearest military post to Captain Coolhand's retreat, while the constant scouting after Indians, the attacks of the outlaws on the stages, all made up a scene of excitement that afforded plenty of gossip.

Among all at the fort there was no one who held the high post of honor for heroism more than did Buffalo Bill, a true Knight in Buckskin, as he is known in the army.

His deeds of daring were of almost daily occurrence, and when he brought in a report all at the fort, from

commandant down to the humblest private soldier, knew that it was true.

Time and again the wish had been expressed that Buffalo Bill would be allowed to go on a hunt for the daring road agents known as the Mounted Sharps, and who, under their daring, cruel leader, were a terror to the country.

But the Overland Company was expected to protect its own coaches and pony-riders, and hence neither some dashing young officer nor the chief of scouts had been sent on the duty of tracking down the outlaws.

If they came up with them their duty was to capture them; but the vast country to be guarded by the soldiers from the redskin raids was too great to take men from that work and send them after a band of horse-thieves and stage-robbers.

At last, however, a demand had been made secretly by Captain Lloyd Winter for help.

The Mounted Sharps were becoming so very daring in their attacks that they were getting unbearable, and the stage company were thinking of withdrawing their coaches.

Now and then, when it had come to such a pass, a direct demand on the military forces for help had resulted in a scouring of the trail from one end to the other by soldiers.

But not an outlaw would be seen then, and after a short while they would again reappear and be at their old tricks.

At last, as a couple of pony-riders, a stage-driver, and several passengers had been killed on the trail of the Overland Company, and many robberies had been committed, Captain Lloyd Winter had determined to act upon the suggestion of one of his men and ask Colonel Duncan to give him the services of Buffalo Bill, and not let it be known that the scout was to go upon the track of the outlaws, and try and find their retreats, when a secret attack could be made upon them.

The result of this request the reader has seen, and how Buffalo Bill gave a pledge, which the Overland superintendent at first regarded in the light of a bluff, when he coolly told him he would unearth the Mounted Sharps and bring them to justice, or drive them from the stage and pony-rider trails.

But the scout's going on this mission was to be kept a secret from all save the very few most interested.

In this way, alone, he asserted that he could successfully discover the many spies who certainly gave notice to the outlaws when a valuable freight was to go through.

The arrival of Left-Hand Larry's coach, one which had been held up by the highwaymen several days before the California coach passed, and from which two young men, who had come to visit the fort, were kidnaped at Fort Faraway, and the information he gave of having been held up on the way, was not a surprise to those who were told of it.

But Larry had very little to say about it, made few comments, and did not say just who had held him up.

To Colonel Duncan, however, he had more to say, for the two young hunters, Burt Sprague and Maury Sanford by name, who were his passengers and had been kidnaped, he had to fully account for—that is, as far as lay in his power to do so.

It was a severe blow to Colonel Duncan, to learn of the capture of the young men, who were to have been his guests.

Their fathers were especial friends of his, and he had extended the invitation to them to visit him, knowing that they were fond of wild sports, and had hunted much in foreign lands.

The capture of the young men had at once created intense excitement in the fort, and Lieutenant Keyes, the senior lieutenant, and other officers promptly volunteered to go after them.

To the surprise of all the request was met by a refusal from the colonel for any search to be made for the kidnaped men.

What could such refusal mean?

Colonel Duncan was a man to act promptly when there was need for so doing.

But now he made no effort to attempt the capture of his two young friends, so boldly captured by the outlaws.

The officers at the fort could not understand the colonel's motive.

The truth was that there were none of them in the secret.

And the secret lay with Buffalo Bill.

He had requested that no effort be made to secure the two young men from the outlaws until he sent word to do so.

Then came another stir at the fort in the arrival of Lone Sam, the two detectives, and the Giant Miner.

Again Buffalo Bill's letter and Lone Sam's testimony decided Colonel Duncan in the intention of still leaving all to the scout.

When he had heard the story of the detectives, and that of the Giant Miner, with what Lone Sam had to say, he decided that Buffalo Bill was right in detaining the two secret service officers.

So he ordered them and the miner to be kept under guard, yet be allowed the freedom of the fort by day.

Then he set himself to the task of looking over the papers the miner had intrusted to him, and the result was that he at once sent for the man.

"I have been looking over your papers, my man, and I find that they are most valuable evidence in your behalf."

"Are they not a proof of plots against me, sir, as against the others who were heirs, and whose death alone gave me a claim?"

"They certainly are."

"That was why I was entrapped to the asylum and held there in a living death, as it were, for years."

"They hoped to break me down, and, failing, when I was escaping they sought to kill me."

"In self-defense I struggled with my intended murderer, and he fell dead."

"These detectives may or may not be in the plot, yet I believe they are, and I know they would have killed me on my way East with them."

"Appearances are certainly against them from their own actions, my man, and I have determined to accept your parole of honor to be on hand when wanted, and allow you to return to your mine."

"Oh, thank you, sir."

"I gladly accept such parole, and you have only to send for me when you want me."

Colonel Duncan, after a moment of hesitation, wrote out the parole, and the miner signed it in a bold hand, having a very striking autograph.

"Now, sir, may I ask if you have any word to send to Buffalo Bill?" asked the miner.

"Do you expect to see him?"

"Yes, sir."

"When and where?"

"I shall look for him at Lone Sam's cabin, sir, for I believe I shall strike his trail there."

"Yes; tell him that I have perfect confidence in his judgment, and am doing as he requested."

"I will tell him, sir," and again thanking the colonel for his freedom, and declining a horse offered to him, the Giant Miner left the fort, going off at a long, swinging stride that rapidly carried him over the country.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE.

Upon leaving the fort the Giant Miner cast the miles behind him in a way that would have surprised a horse.

At last he turned into a little valley that narrowed to a canyon at the upper end, and there, hidden from view among the pines, was a little log cabin.

It was crudely built, but strong and comfortable, and it was the home of the strange man who had been driven by cruel persecution to a hiding place in the far West.

The door was open, all remaining just as the two detectives had left it with their prisoner.

Within all was confusion; things scattered about as though a thorough search of the cabin had been made.

Books, border attire, weapons, cooking utensils, and provisions were strewn all about.

"They made a very thorough search, pretending to look for important papers bearing upon my case, but in reality seeking my gold.

"But they did not find it.

"Had they done so, then it would have become their property, my life would have quickly ended, and they would make no report of their valuable find.

"But Buffalo Bill cleverly saw through their game.

"God bless Buffalo Bill!"

Thus musing to himself, the Giant Miner was putting his scattered belongings again in their places.

He soon had all in good order once more, cooked his dinner, made a change in his wardrobe, rolled up a pack containing provisions and a couple of blankets, and with a rifle slung at his back, a belt of arms about his waist, and a pick thrown over his shoulder, started out as though on a prospecting tour for gold.

He turned his steps down the valley until he came to a bend in the shallow, sandy stream.

Here he halted, drew off his boots and socks, and, wading in among the willows, begun to dig down in the sand.

A few handfuls of sand being thrown out, he found a chain which he drew hard upon.

It raised an iron cover to a box, imbedded in the sand, and over which the stream flowed, the wash of sand quickly hiding all trace of what lay beneath.

Taking from his pocket a buckskin bag he had fetched from the cabin, he dropped it into the iron box, where there were a number of other such bags, all of them containing something heavy it appeared, and being firmly tied up.

The lid of the box raising with the back up stream caused the water to rush each side, thus preventing the sand from flowing in and filling it up.

Having placed the little buckskin bag in the box, the heavy lid was again lowered, the chain dropped on the top, and the sand was quickly borne over it by the flow of the water, wholly concealing it from sight as before.

Retracing his way to the shore, the miner stooped to pick up his weapons and pack again, when suddenly two shots rang out, almost as one.

Following the shots, a bullet struck the handle of the pick held in the hand of the miner and buried itself there.

Instantly the Giant Miner sprang to shelter among the willows, his rifle ready, for the shots told him that he had an intended assassin near.

He had evidently been near looking at his cleverly concealed treasure, and the man, or men, who had tracked him meant to first take his life and then his treasure.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SCOUT'S DEATH SHOT.

The Giant Miner was crouching among the willows, his face white and stern, his nerve as firm as iron, waiting like a tiger to spring upon his prey.

But only half a moment passed with the Giant Miner thus at bay, when he heard a shout from over on the ridge.

A strange foe it was to fire upon him and then hail.

But he answered the hail.

"Hello! where are you, pard?"

"Here among the willows, awaiting friend or foe."

"I am a friend."

"Do you fire upon a friend?"

"I did not fire upon you."

"The bullet struck within a few inches of my hands."

"It was meant for your heart, but my shot evidently changed its course."

"Yes; there were two shots fired. Where is the man who fired the other?"

"Lying here at my feet dead."

"Who killed him?"

"I did. He had his gun aimed at you."

"I was just in the second of time with my shot."

"Who are you?"

"First tell me if I am wrong in believing you to be the Giant Miner?"

"You are right. I am the Giant Miner, as they call me out here."

"I thought so, though I only had a quick glance at you."

"Again I ask, who are you?"

"Buffalo Bill."

The Giant Miner gave a yell of joy.

At once he sprang from his hiding place among the willows.

As he came into view in the flat, he saw the form of

the scout appear on the ridge, a couple of hundred yards away, and where there was a thicket.

Instantly he waved his hat, and, picking up his traps, he hastily walked across the bit of meadow land and then up the hill to where Buffalo Bill stood.

The scout awaited him, and as he drew near offered his hand, which the miner warmly grasped.

"I thought you were at the fort."

"No. Colonel Duncan, after looking over the papers I gave him, sent for me and released me upon my own promise to return when he wanted me."

"I am glad that he trusted you, for I was going to send after you."

"After me?"

"Yes; for I believe you can help me, and Lone Sam is of the same opinion, so I was now on my way to his cabin to have him go for you."

"I am glad if I can serve you, Cody."

"I believe you are."

"I am just off of a scent, and took the way by your cabin, intending to lock it up, as I remember you told me how the detectives had left it."

"Yes, they left everything scattered about, in their search for my gold."

"Which they did not find, I am glad to see."

"You know, then?"

"That you were visiting its hiding place when you were fired on."

"Ah, yes, I was so glad to see you, Buffalo Bill, I had forgotten about the two shots."

"I was just going out to trail you."

"Ah! then our meeting is fortunate."

"You have been to your cabin then, for the door was locked."

"Yes."

"But tell me—who fired that shot at me?"

"He is lying up yonder among the rushes. I do not know him."

"I doubtless do," and the miner was about to walk to the spot indicated by the scout, when he turned and asked suddenly:

"How came you to kill him?"

"I was coming among the pines, the straw preventing my horse from being heard, when I saw a man skulking along, as though to get a shot at some one."

"He had his rifle in his hand, and I at once leaped from my saddle and ran to get a look at his game."

"As I came to where I could see the stream and the willows, you appeared in view, and at the same moment that I recognized you I saw the man come in sight in the edge of this thicket."

Instantly he raised his rifle, rested it in the crotch of a tree, and I had just time to head his shot off, as I saw that you were his target."

"I fired a second before he did, but it was time enough to destroy his aim."

God bless you."

"You have once more been my friend."

"Come, let us see who he is," and the Giant Miner spoke feelingly.

Walking to the thicket he beheld a man lying there dead, a bullet in his brain.

"I know him, Buffalo Bill," said the miner, quietly.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CLOSE CALL.

When Buffalo Bill and Lone Sam started upon the trail of the outlaws, from where they had branched off from the coach, the scout knew that he would only have the services of his companion for a day, and he was anxious to make all the headway in the march in that time.

It had not taken Buffalo Bill long to see that Lone Sam was to be relied upon in every way.

They readily followed the trail from its leaving the coach, and pressed on rapidly where it was not visible, for Buffalo Bill knew from the lay of the land that it could go in but one direction, or turn back the way it had come.

The latter he knew was by no means probable.

At last the two trailers came to the path leading to the breaks in the cliff, down which the game went for water.

They at once turned toward the river.

Arriving there, after watering their horses, a search was made of the surroundings, and they knew, if the outlaws had crossed the river with their prisoners, it had been a very long swim for their horses and a most perilous undertaking.

Especially dangerous would it be for the young girl and her maid, for it will be seen that Buffalo Bill regarded Lola Insley as being with the others.

For Lola Insley, the beautiful daughter of the millionaire Californian, was thought by the two trailers to be with the outlaws, along with the rest of her party.

The scout, however, half disrobed himself and started his horse across on the long swim.

He wished to see if the desperate crossing had been made by the outlaws and their captives.

But, arriving on the other side, after a very hard struggle for his horse, he saw no trails there, not even of game.

Wild animals would not risk that long swim in that surging river, and that seemed proof that the outlaws had not done so.

The scout also had a view of the cliffs on both sides, and was confident there was no place of refuge among them to be reached by swimming.

Fully satisfied that the outlaws had gone to the mountains upon the shore he had left, Buffalo Bill decided to return.

He felt a little anxious as to his horse being able to make it; but, without much clothing, only a small revolver, and no food with him, he must return to the shore he had left.

All that he could he spared the noble animal, and kept his eye constantly upon the other shore.

But after going halfway the horse became more and more distressed.

Fortunately the scout had not brought him over under saddle and bridle, so he was spared that extra weight.

Finding that the horse was showing signs of failing utterly, Buffalo Bill shouted:

"Ho, Sam!"

"Ay, ay."

"Ride in and have your lariat ready to throw and give us a lift, for my horse will not make it, I fear."

In an instant Lone Sam was on the bare back of his

horse, his lasso was coiled, and he rode in until the water was breast deep.

"All right, pard, I am here, and will swim out, if need be," he called out cheerily.

"I am all right, but my horse will never make it," was Buffalo Bill's answer.

A moment after the poor animal began to plunge madly, as he felt his strength going, and Buffalo Bill, who had already slipped from his back, had to swim hard to keep from being struck by his hoofs.

Seeing his master, in a vain hope that he could save him, the poor horse, with a longing for human aid, started toward the scout in mad plunges.

"Swim for your life!" shouted Lone Sam, as he saw the danger the scout was in, and he at the same time forced his horse toward him.

Buffalo Bill fully realized his danger.

He saw that the animal was making a desperate, despairing effort to reach him, not to harm him, but for human sympathy and help, and in his struggles, though they would last but a moment, he might reach him.

So he wisely dove deep beneath the surface of the river.

For a long time he was hidden beneath the waters, until Lone Sam began to grow anxious.

But at last he rose to the surface, far in toward land, and within a hundred feet of Lone Sam.

But the poor horse had sunk from sight.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SEPARATE TRAILS.

Lone Sam gave a wild shout of joy, as he saw his comrade rise above the waters and strike boldly out for the shore.

"I'll meet you, pard," he called out.

"No. I think I am all right, though it did blow me," came the answer.

But Lone Sam still swam toward his comrade, and, turning his horse, held out his hand.

Buffalo Bill grasped it and was thus towed ashore.

"He did strike me, and it knocked the breath out of me," said Buffalo Bill, feeling his broad breast where the iron-shod hoof had dealt him a severe blow.

"I am glad it was no worse."

"Yes, it might have been, for I, too, might have gone down with my horse, poor fellow."

"I tell you, it was a close call; but I have noticed, Sam, when a horse is dying he always turns for sympathy and aid to his master."

"It is true, for I, too, have observed the same thing," said Lone Sam, and he added:

"Now, what is to be done?"

"Well, it is one horse to two men, and so I have a suggestion to make."

"Yes?"

"I am afoot, you mounted."

"Yes; but you take my horse, or rather mule," said Lone Sam, who was mounted upon a splendid mule large, long-bodied, and as clean-limbed as a deer.

"Thanks, Sam, but my experience with a mule has not always been a happy one," said the scout, dryly.

"But that mule is a good one, and he's as fleet as a

deer and can run a day and not feel it, while he can climb where a goat can.

"He doesn't seem like a horse, and is my especial property."

"Every crow thinks its own the blackest; but I guess your mule is all right, and to prove it I'll just take him, especially as he may have to play the goat act and climb."

"All right, Pard Bill, and I'll shoulder my saddle and strike for camp, for you know I have to get back to camp for to-morrow's riders."

"Yes, and I will push on and see what I can discover, and come for you when I find anything of importance."

"Good!"

"I feel awful sorry about my poor horse; but it was too long a swim."

"Yes, and proves that the outlaws never made it, especially with their prisoners."

"Sure."

"They have gone on to the mountains, where they have some securely hidden retreat, for I have hunted for them often before in vain."

"But this time they have prisoners with them, seven in all, as I count them."

"True."

"Then they have what luggage and things they took from Lumley's coach, the cushions, harness of two horses, and all that, so I have an idea that they cannot take away so many prisoners and not be tracked, when we are so close on their trail."

This was the opinion of both Buffalo Bill and Sam, and they at once decided that the latter was to go on with the scout until he reached the foothills of the range, and then follow it around to his cabin.

Buffalo Bill was then to continue on the trail to the mountain, mounted on Lone Sam's splendid mule.

Up through the break in the cliff they made their way, Buffalo Bill insisting that Lone Sam should ride until he had to do what he was pleased to call the "hoof-act," and they pushed on at a lively pace, the scout being a good walker.

At last they came to the mountain spur already referred to, and upon either side of which the trail branched off.

Thus far they had not been able to find any trace of the outlaws' trail.

There had been during the time that elapsed a great deal of game passing to and fro, and, as the outlaws well knew would be the case, obliterating every trace of the tracks of the horses.

So there they separated, Buffalo Bill remaining at the forks of the trails either side of the spur and Lone Sam turning to the left along the foothills.

"If you are not in by to-morrow night, as soon as the stages and pony-riders pass my station, I shall be on your trail," said Lone Sam.

"All right pard; but it will not take me long to either find the outlaws' trail at some point, or be sure that I cannot find it, and I'll report at your cabin when convinced one way or the other," was Buffalo Bill's answer, and he stood by the mule, right where Lone Sam had left him, his eyes scanning every foot of ground afar and near.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN THE CAMP OF THE MOUNTAIN SHARPS.

When the outlaws, whose trail Buffalo Bill was now searching for, entered the valley with their prisoners, the captives knew the end of their journey must be near, and, after all they had experienced, they were not sorry.

The tethered and loose horses in the meadowland proved that a camp must be near, and could be no other than the retreat of the Mounted Sharps, their foes.

As for Lige Lumley, nothing escaped him. He just felt that the outlaws were making a sad mistake in allowing him to go unblindfolded into their retreat, for he intended to lead Buffalo Bill and his scouts back upon them.

"As soon as I git out," he added to himself.

It was a wise addition, but then, Lige had passed through so many ups and downs, he did not doubt that he would soon get out of this pinch.

Following a more defined trail by the side of the lakes, and into the timber beyond, which grew beneath lofty cliffs, the outlaws led their prisoners to several cabins sheltered there.

A little rivulet flowed out of the cliffs clear and sparkling, and made its way into the nearest lake; the grass was plentiful and as soft as velvet, and the cabins were snugly ensconced in the heavy timber about them.

Two large dogs, which lay before the center one of three log huts, got up and eyed the prisoners viciously, but a command from the masked leader sent the brutes off, and, turning to Mr. Insley, the man said:

"You are to take the cabin on the right with the driver and your man; the one on the left is for the senorita.

"I shall free your hands of the bracelets, but you are all to be manacled around the ankles, so that you will not go far."

"Do you mean that you will put irons on a woman, too?" indignantly demanded Mr. Insley.

"No; she can go free.

"But all of you beware not to attempt to leave your cabins, or the dogs will spring upon you, and the negro and Chinnee will guard you, too, for I must go off on the trail again."

"One moment, pard."

"Yes, Lige."

"Are you Captain Coolhand?"

"I am not."

"Where is he?"

"He'll be here when wanted."

"We don't want him.

"Jist tell him ter stay away forever and ever, amen!"

The masked man laughed and said:

"I am sorry, but he cannot oblige you. He will return with me, and so will Miss Insley, whom he will have captured!"

"I don't believe yer; she went through O. K., and don't you forget it."

"If she was with Nebraska Ned she did not."

Lige felt a sinking at the heart, for he had hoped at least that Lola Insley had gone through safely, after her plucky ride in the night alone.

The masked man then ordered the negro to prepare dinner for his "guests," and gave the Chinnee instructions to keep his eye upon all, for should they escape Captain

Coolhand would kill them for neglect of duty, and then, on a fresh horse, he dashed away out of the valley.

"Well, pards, we is in it with both feet," said Lige Lumley, when the three men were alone in their cabin.

Mr. Insley glanced at the manacles about their ankles and said:

"Yes, Lumley, in it with both feet manacled. What do you think of his words about my daughter being captured?"

"I don't want ter believe him. If he gits her, too, he kin make his own tarms."

"I am willing to pay any ransom if she is in his clutches."

"As cap'n isn't here, he must be off on the stage trail with the rest of his band, so he may have her a prisoner."

"You do not think, then, that masked man was the chief of the outlaws? He said he wasn't. He is some officer, I guess."

"There is the negro; I will ask him."

The black outlaw was called and asked if the masked man was Captain Coolhand.

"No, boss, he ain't."

"Who is he?"

"Only ther cap'n knows, sah; some of us don't."

"Where is the captain?"

"On ther trail, sah."

"How many men has he in his hand?"

"I ain't tellin', sah, so don't axe no more."

"Say, nigger, if you wants ter save thet black neck o' your'n from bein' stretched, and get dead boodles of dust, you'll jist help us out o' this scrape," said Lige Lumley.

The negro smiled, shut one eye, placed his thumb on the end of his nose, and walked away in silence, while the Chinaman, whom the prisoners had not seen, laughed, and called out:

"Black nigger, Melican man, allee lightee."

CHAPTER XXV.

AN UNLOOKED-FOR ARRIVAL.

The black road agent prepared a good meal for the prisoners.

All went to the rough table together, and were hungry enough to enjoy what was set before them. But Mr. Insley, anxious as to the fate of his daughter, ate only a little.

"Pard, yer hev got ter feed, if yer wishes ter work, and there is no tellin' what we may hev ter do to git away," urged Lige.

"If my child was only here with me, the dread would be little; but it is her unknown fate that tortures me," was the Californian's reply.

"Well, I'd like ter make a break afore ther chief and ther rest of ther band comes in; but I ain't jist sure what we could do with ther nigger and ther heathen."

"And the dogs," added Sanchez, with a shudder.

"I would not leave here now if I could, but will remain to see if they bring my child in, as that masked outlaw said they would."

"Well, pard, I'm hoping all will come right fer her and fer us. You see, sir, I have a sneakin' idee thet Buffalo Bill wil git on our trail and help us out."

"But what can he do, alone?"

"Ther ain't any man as kin do more alone than he kin; but he has got ther call on plenty of men if he wants 'em."

"But he may have been killed, for he rode on ahead of us, you know."

"California pard, I is one thet don't believe ther bullet has been made ter kill Buffalo Bill."

"You think he bears a charmed life?"

"I knows it. And now, sir, I has an idee. The more I has thought it over since that man on horseback came after us last night, the more I believe he was not Buffalo Bill."

"But you recognized him?"

"I thought so, then, but I don't now."

"What has made you change your mind?"

"Well, ther voice wan't jist Buffalo Bill's, and then, he hed more ter say then it strikes me Buffalo Bill would, fer he don't talk any too much."

"Ag'in, if it had been Buffalo Bill he'd hev kept near ther coach, which that man didn't do."

"Who could it have been, if it was not Buffalo Bill?"

"Well, there is an outlaw in these parts that keeps himself mighty shy of showing up. He hev been seen now and then, and he was taken fer Buffalo Bill every time."

"How strange."

"No, fer he looks as like him as two revolvers resembles each other, if you don't look too close."

"If you do, then yer sees thet it ain't Bill, but a sneakin' gerloot as calls himself Shadow Bill."

"Ah!"

"He were in the camps one time, playin' honest, an' were mighty proud of lookin' like Buffalo Bill, but some government officers came along one day, lookin' fer crooks, and they spotted Shadow Bill as a feller that should have been hung some moons before for his crimes, and they were preparing to rope him in when he seen 'em, and, Lordy! how he did push ther breeze fer the wilderness, and since then he has been a reg'lar out and out road agent."

"Now, ther man who come after us might have been Shadow Bill, and I'm thinkin' it were, for see how them outlaws know'd all about where ther gold was hid in ther coach, and all else."

"So they did."

"And nobody knew that secret, you told me, but you."

"It is true."

"But we give it away to the man we thought was Buffalo Bill."

"So we did."

"So, says I, don't be surprised if he was Shadow Bill, and if he was, then Buffalo Bill is somewhere on the trail after us, and if he starts to rescue us you mind my words, Pard Insley, he's the very man ter do it."

"Heaven grant that you are right, Lumley; but, to me, it seems to be placing too much on one man, even if his name is Buffalo Bill."

"Wait and see, sir."

"I knows him from 'way back. He's a cyclone all by hisself."

Mr. Insley was cheered greatly by the confidence which Lige had in Buffalo Bill, and he said so.

While they were talking a horseman was seen coming up the valley at a canter.

"Great Scott! it's Buffalo Bill, and he is coming into this den of thieves!"

"Now, nigger, Chinee, and dogs, look out fer fur to fly," cried Lige, all excitement.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SCOUT'S COUNTERPART.

Did Buffalo Bill not know his danger?

The prisoners stood aghast at his boldness.

"He is coming to certain death. Would that we could warn him," said Mr. Insley.

On come the horseman, at a swinging gallop, his horse following the trail straight to the camp.

The prisoners looked toward the dogs, the Chinee and the negro, then grouped about the fire having their dinner. They evidently saw the horseman, but it did not seem to alarm them.

As he drew nearer Lige Lumley suddenly smothered an imprecation and said:

"Thet ain't Buffalo Bill; it's thet skunk, Shadow Bill, who played us last night fer fools."

The horseman was now near the camp-fire, and the negro and Chinaman rose to greet him.

He was a finely-formed man, and with a strikingly handsome face.

He certainly looked the counterpart of the great scout at a glance, but a closer inspection revealed that, though he was about Buffalo Bill's size, wore his hair long, had a fine mustache and imperial, he was not the scout.

His face was handsome, it was true, but he possessed not the stamp of nobleness so indelibly imprinted upon every feature of Buffalo Bill's face.

There was an evil look in his eyes, a sinister expression about the mouth, and the man, when scanned closely, was seen to be altogether a different person from the famous scout.

The Chinee took his horse, the negro set to work to prepare dinner for him. For some moments he conversed with the negro, asking many questions and listening attentively to the answers.

At last the man sat down and leisurely ate the meal prepared for him. This over, he lighted a cigar and strolled to the cabin, where the maid, Anita, was sitting.

What he said to her the others did not hear.

Then he came over to where Mr. Insley, Lumley and Sanchez were.

"Well, Mr. Insley, we meet again," he remarked.

"If you mean that you are the man who impersonated the noble scout, Cody, last night, I am sorry to say that we do."

"Yes, I am Buffalo Bill, the scout, when it pleases me so to be, as it did last night. It was clever in me, wasn't it, for I discovered all that I wished to know."

"Cuss yer ugly pictur, yer did," growled Lumley.

The man laughed, twirled his mustache, and replied: "Don't call me ugly, Lumley, for I am said to be the image of Buffalo Bill."

"Yes, if yer black heart don't show."

"Go slow, Lumley, for I am in my own camp, and you

should not beard a lion in his den, unless you wish to feel the weight of his anger.

"But come! I am here to have a talk with this gentleman, whom I am anxious to make terms with, for I neither wish to hold him or his beautiful daughter prisoners longer than can be helped."

"Great God! you have my daughter then in your power," cried Lee Insley, excitedly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CAPTAIN COOLHAND'S MASTER-STROKE.

For answer, the outlaw leader uttered a light laugh.

"When and how did you capture her, Cap'n Coolhand, for I believe you is that devil on horseback?" quickly asked Lige.

"I captured her from Nebraska Ned's coach, when she was on her way alone to Outfit City, having started to foil me and carry her father's money and valuables through in that way, hoping the regular stage would go through all right.

"It was you who put her up to this, Lumley."

"Yes, I did, and I only regrets she did not go through."

"Well, sir, as you captured my daughter, and with her a fortune, I suppose you will release us now, caring only for my gold and jewels?"

"But I did not get the fortune!"

"I do not understand."

"I captured the young lady, and she is safe in my other retreat, for I may as well admit that I am Captain Coolhand, so you will know with whom you are making terms."

"You captured my daughter, but did not get what money and jewelry she had with her?" asked Mr. Insley in surprise.

"Got the girl but not the money."

"He's trying to bluff yer, Pard Insley," averred Lumley.

"You keep silent, sir!"

"No, Mr. Insley, I did not get the gold and other stuff for the simple reason that Buffalo Bill, my handsome double, you know, met the coach, and I have a score to settle with Nebraska Ned, for he told the young lady to give the scout all that she had valuable with her, to be taken to the fort and kept until safe to go through."

"Good! Oh, Lordy, good!" yelled Lumley.

The chief cast a malignant glance at Lige, but continued:

"Now, Mr. Insley, what I have is your daughter and yourself prisoners, with your two servants and this man Lumley. In the way of booty I have the gold my lieutenant found in the secret hiding place in the coach, and which you so kindly told me of last night when you thought I was Buffalo Bill."

"Now, Mr. Insley, I wish the rest of the gold you sent to the fort, the money and jewelry your daughter had, and then you and those with you are free to take the coach westward, for I will guide you to where you can catch it."

"I cannot give up what I have not in my possession, or I would, extravagant as your demands are, agree to your terms."

"You can write an order for the money and the valu-

ables, and I will send a man to the fort, to whom they will be delivered."

"I will do so if our freedom, the freedom of all, can be secured by the giving up of the money and other things.

"But I must see my daughter and converse with her."

"No, you shall see her only when I take you to the other retreat to catch the coach, after I have your riches. She shall be my hostage for the keeping of your part of our contract."

"I am in your power, and can but obey. When shall I give you the order, though I do not know whom to draw it on, as I cannot tell in whose keeping my daughter placed the things?"

"Draw it upon the paymaster at the fort, and order him to deliver to David Jenks, assistant superintendent of the Overland Coach Company, your gold coin, paper money and valuables, sent for safe keeping, when informed that outlaws were waiting to hold you up.

"State in that order that through the brave action and cleverness of Driver Lige Lumley, who drove your coach by a long trail around all danger, you were enabled to avoid the Mounted Sharps and arrive, after some days, in Good-Luck Camp in safety, and where you will await the coming of your property, Mr. Jenks being given a guard to accompany him by the superintendent at Outfit City.

"I will give you the full particulars of what you are to write, and if you do your part squarely by me, I will do right by you."

"You couldn't if yer tried, durn yer," growled Lige, who had listened in utter amazement to what Captain Coolhand had been saying.

The order was dictated by Captain Coolhand, written carefully by the Californian, and signed,

"Thanks! I shall start out to-morrow to make the greatest stroke of my life, one that will end my career as a road agent, for I shall be able to live on my money and enjoy my later years," and with this the chief of the Mounted Sharps left his prisoners, just as night settled down upon the little valley.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MYSTERY OF LOLA EXPLAINED.

Now to explain how Lola Insley, Lee Insley's daughter, disappeared.

When Nebraska Ned's coach started on its way to Outfit City, two days before, Lola Insley lay back upon the seat in deep thought.

She congratulated herself upon having gotten rid of her money and valuables, saved them from the outlaws through Buffalo Bill, and then the thought came to her that there was no need of her going on to Outfit City alone.

The extra coach on which her father was to travel could not be very far behind, and suddenly she made the bold resolve to slip out of Nebraska Ned's stage and wait in the trail for the coming along of her father. This is what she thought. As a matter of fact her father did not go on this coach, because he was detained by illness and did not actually start as has been shown until two days later.

Did she tell Ned of her intention she knew he would at once put his veto upon her act. He could not wait with the coach for the extra to come up, and so she decided to quietly give him the slip.

She then watched her chance, and when the coach came to a rough part of the trail, ascending a hill, and where the timber was so dense all was blackness about her, she quietly opened the door, swung herself around upon the step, closed it, and lightly sprang off.

She lighted upon her feet and, breathing a sigh of relief, she stood there in the trail, watching the flickering of the stage lamps as it went on up the hill, to soon disappear.

When the last glimmer of the coach lights vanished, then only did Lola Insley realize how terribly rash had been her act.

She was alone in a wilderness!

The stage was not yet beyond recall, and she was tempted to run rapidly after it.

She called loudly, but if Nebraska Ned heard the cry he took it for the almost human screech of a panther.

At last she grew calmer. Her nerve returned to her. She began to take in her surroundings, even though it was an almost midnight gloom around her.

She moved about to at last find a large boulder, or shaft of rock. It was but a few paces from the trail, and upon this she climbed, after much effort.

A couple of dwarf pines were upon the top, and the spines from them made a soft bed, so she settled herself down, drawing her cloak about her, and with her head on her arm decided to rest there in patience.

The long journey, however, had greatly fatigued her, and in a few moments she was in a deep sleep.

She was awakened by the sound of hoofs and the rumble and crash of wheels.

"The coach!" she cried, but before she really realized that it was the west-bound coach it had passed along on the trail despite her call!

Once more she sank to sleep, to be again awakened by the sound of hoofs.

A single horseman dashed by like a ghost in the darkness.

Could she but have known that it was Lone Sam going to meet Nebraska Ned's coach on its way back from Outfit City!

A third time she slept.

Once again she sank to sleep, and her slumber was sound.

She awoke, chilled through; the day had dawned, and all about her was a scene wild in the extreme.

She had a little food that she had brought with her, and ate a small portion of it.

What could have happened to Lige Lumley's coach, she wondered. Had it passed her in the night while she slept.

She at once ran to the trail and gazed fixedly at it, to discern the tracks of the two coaches—the trail of the west-bound after that of Nebraska Ned's.

Her father's coach had not been along.

Surely he must have had an accident.

She was now very thirsty and walked on until at last she came to a stream.

It quenched her thirst, and she bathed her face and felt refreshed.

She would find a secure hiding place and there await the coming of the extra coach.

A secure hiding place was readily found, another outlying of the cliffs with a crevice in it, and dwarf pines clinging to it.

Gathering a heap of pine spines Lola Insley made for herself a perfect nest in the crevice of the rock.

It was a long time before sleep came to her eyes, but at last nature yielded to fatigue, and she sank into a deep slumber.

She awoke with a start. It was dawn.

But, surely, some sound had awakened her—what she did not know.

Arising, she found that her limbs were stiff from exposure.

But she walked to the stream, got a draught of water, and bathed her face.

Then she returned to her lair to decide what was best for her to do.

Some accident must have happened to her father, for no coach had passed in the night; there were no fresh tracks in the trail.

It then dawned upon her to walk back to Lone Sam's cabin.

She remembered that she had passed it in Nebraska Ned's coach.

It could not be over twenty miles away, surely. Why had she not thought of that before?

From there she could go to the fort.

The stock-tender had seemed so kind, and he surely would aid her in her distress and give her a horse to ride to the fort.

There, her story told, the officer would send out brave Buffalo Bill, she thought, to find her father.

She ate the remnant of her food, and then started upon her way.

That is, she prepared to leave the rock, when she gave a low cry of alarm and shrank back.

There, not fifty feet away, she beheld a large mountain lion!—his basilisk eyes fixed upon her!

Down on the rocks she crouched, scarcely daring to move, and crouching fifty feet away, silent, motionless, save for the whisking of his tail, was the huge mountain terror!

How long she crouched there she could not tell. She had drawn her revolver, but dared she fire? She was a good shot, but what if she only wounded the fierce brute?

So the time passed until at last she once more heard hoof-falls.

It was a horseman, the sound told her, and she could welcome even an outlaw then!

He appeared to be crossing the ridge, and, a moment after, came in sight.

The panther heard him, too; saw him, uttered a savage growl, and refused to give up his hoped-for prey.

Then came a shot, a yelp, and she knew no more!

She had fainted when succor was at hand!

It was a woman's privilege, and she had availed herself of it.

When she recovered she found herself lying on the

banks of the little stream. Her hair was loose and hung in waves about her.

She opened her eyes upon a face she had seen before.

After a long breath or two she said:

"You are Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes, lady, I am."

"You saved me from a fearful death?"

"I am happy in coming along as I did."

"How do you feel, miss?"

"All right, now."

"May I ask if you are not Nebraska Ned's passenger of two nights ago?"

"Yes, I am that woman."

"Did the outlaws take you from his coach?"

"No, I left the coach of my own accord, to wait there until my father's coach came along."

"Ah! the secret is out, then."

"What secret?"

"You are Miss Lola Insley of California?"

"I am!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHO HE WAS.

"Miss Insley, I am more than happy to have found you."

Buffalo Bill spoke with an earnestness that could but attract Lola Insley's attention, and she said, naively:

"Not more than I am at having been found. Where is that terrible beast?"

"Lying over there dead. I shall see that you get his skin, head, claws, and all, as a reminder of your adventure."

"A terrible reminder, but I should like it, and I thank you. But, Mr. Cody, what are you going to do with me, now you have saved me?"

"Take you to Lone Sam's cabin and later on to the fort."

"Oh, sir, can you tell me of my father?" and in an eager, rapid manner Lola told just why she had slipped out of Nebraska Ned's coach.

"Yes, Miss Insley, I have found your father," answered Buffalo Bill, after listening to her story with deepest interest.

"Is he safe, and——"

"All safe, but a prisoner."

"But I'll tell you as we go along, for I am anxious to get to Lone Sam's cabin, that he may go to the fort for help for me."

"You will accept a ride behind me on my mule, of course."

"Gladly."

He led the large and handsome mule up and lifted her lightly to a seat behind his saddle. . .

Then he mounted, and, as he crossed the trail, he said: "I do not care to meet any one, so go this way to Sam's cabin."

"And my father is safe?"

"I'll tell you all about him."

So Buffalo Bill told the story of how Lige Lumley's coach had been held up and how it had been taken off the trail by following the bed of a creek.

The fate of the coach, and all, as he had read the signs, he had made known, and ended with:

"Now, when Lone Sam left me on foot, as he did, I came on, and, after some very good guessing, thinking, and trailing, I hit upon the retreat of the outlaws."

"I found out enough to know that your father and those with him were there, and then I decided to strike for Lone Sam's cabin, get help, and swoop down upon the outlaws with all dispatch."

"What guided me the way that led me to you I do not know; some unseen influence, I suppose."

"And now I can assure you that your father will soon be rescued."

"Heaven bless you!"

On went the splendid mule, caring nothing for his double weight, sure-footed and untiring.

At last the scout halted.

"Miss Insley, I caught sight of a man running along yonder ridge. Will you await me here for a few minutes, until I see who he is and what mischief he is up to?"

She slipped quickly to the ground, and Buffalo Bill spurred on for a couple of hundred yards.

There his mule pricked up his ears, and Buffalo Bill halted.

A moment after, up the hill, the scout saw the man he sought.

"That fellow is tracking human game, I am certain," decided Buffalo Bill, as he shaded his eyes with his hand and looked up toward the bright hilltop.

He sprang from his saddle, hitched the mule, and, seeing that Lola Insley was still in sight, beckoned to her to come there.

She did so, but when she reached the spot where the mule was tied, the scout was not to be seen.

He had gone up over the ridge and disappeared.

What Buffalo Bill saw was a man crouching down and watching some one, or something down in a little vale.

A moment after the man rose to his feet, the rifle he carried was leveled with a rest against a small tree, and just then the scout saw the game he was after.

"My God! It is the Giant Miner!"

With this exclamation Cody's rifle flew to his shoulder and his finger pulled trigger a second in advance of the one whose shot was to kill the miner!

The reader knows the result, and also how it was that Buffalo Bill came to be there at that time.

* * * * *

When Buffalo Bill had told the miner that he was not alone, and they went to see the body of the man who had fallen under the scout's deadly aim, the latter had quickly said:

"You say that you know him—who is he?"

"David Jenks, the assistant superintendent of the Overland Company."

Buffalo Bill gave a loud whistle, and said:

"What was his motive in wishing to kill you?"

"He had two motives—first, he wished to get my gold, and second, he knew that I suspected him of being the secret ally or spy of the Mounted Sharps."

"Was he?"

"You saw that he aimed at my life, so a man who would do that could be guilty of any crime."

"That is true; but his career is ended, and the Mounted Sharps will not be long behind him."

"I hope not, for I was going to give you aid in hunting them down, as I have lately been secretly on their trail, and know their retreat."

"In a valley that severs a mountain spur over toward the river?"

"Ah! you too know it."

"Yes, I have tracked them, and am now going to Lone Sam's cabin to send to the fort for help."

"No need of help. There are but three, the chief, a negro and a Chinese, with this dead man their secret ally"—at which information Buffalo Bill gave another whistle of surprise.

CHAPTER XXX.

A TRIO ON THE TRAIL.

It was a ghastly companion for a ride, the body of the dead superintendent strapped over the saddle to carry it to Lone Sam's cabin, but brave Lola Insley had suggested that it should be so.

The dead man was borne to Sam's cabin and Lola rode behind as she had on her way across the country.

Buffalo Bill and the Giant Miner walked, and led the way at a very quick gait.

When Buffalo Bill and Miss Insley reached the cabin the miner had been there for a quarter of an hour, and Lone Sam had heard the story of what had occurred.

The pony-riders had not arrived, and Miss Insley was at once given possession of the cabin, while the body of the superintendent was put in a small hut near.

Buffalo Bill wrote two letters, one to Colonel Duncan, the other to Captain Lloyd Winter. Of the former he asked that an escort of cavalry be sent the next day to Lone Sam's cabin, that was all.

To the superintendent he wrote that it was important he should come with all dispatch to Lone Sam's cabin, and to bring an extra coach with him.

In conclusion he said:

"When you reach the cabin you will see if it was a game of bluff on my part or not."

Both Buffalo Bill and the Giant Miner kept out of sight when the pony-riders dashed up to the cabin, and as Lola Insley was already domiciled in Sam's pleasant quarters, they saw only the stock-tender, received the letters, and dashed on their way.

Then Lola was told to make herself perfectly at home and to "hold the fort" until the return of the three men, who were going upon an expedition that they hoped would prove a grand success.

Cody and Lone Sam had held a long talk with the Giant Miner, and were convinced that he was right in his assertion that the Mounted Sharps numbered only three men in the field—Captain Coolhand, the Chinaman, and the negro, with the traitor assistant superintendent, Jenks, as an occasional ally to swell the force. He told just how the trails ran from the ridge known as Devil's Back-Bone, so the scout and stock-tender could see how three men could hold a coach up a dozen times within a fifty mile drive.

"They have a framework in which rifles are placed, so that half a dozen guns can be fired at once, and in other ways give an idea of numbers, while Captain Coolhand is an expert ventriloquist and can give an order and answer it at a distance, in a wonderful way.

"I have watched them, and was slowly laying my plans to one day strike a blow and alone rake in the whole outfit."

Mounted upon fresh horses the three rode off upon the trail to the retreat of the Mounted Sharps.

They reached the secret valley in the night, and quietly waited for dawn.

Their first duty was to round up the outlying horses, for no watch was kept, and half a hundred splendid animals were driven into the log corral near the entrance to the valley.

Then the three daring men moved cautiously on foot toward the cabins.

They approached near to the cabins, the wind fortunately being in their faces, so that the dogs did not get the scent. There they waited.

At last, as the morning broke, the negro outlaw stepped out of a cabin and came toward the camp-fire.

"Darkie Dick!"

"Who dat callin' me?"

"Buffalo Bill!" and he stepped into view as he spoke.

"Lordy, Massa Bill, I thought it were a voice from de clouds.

"I so glad ter see yer, sah! But, come out o' sight, quick, fer I has got somethin' ter tell yer."

The negro quickly led the way into the bushes, but started, as he saw the scout was not alone.

"Massa Bill, and gemmans, I tells yer honest, I ain't no outlaw," he protested.

"Yer see, sah, when I were at ther fort my old massa come thar, and he know'd I were suspected of a murder, and so he jist told me he were in it fer money.

"Well, Massa Bill, I were terrible distressed, and didn't know what ter do, until one night he come to me and says how he hed jest robbed all the officers, fer he were what he call a professional burglar, and as he hed fixed it so I would be suspected, I must git out and wait fer him at a certain place.

"Lordy! I was jist scared ter death, and only too anxious ter go; but when I started, he bein' with me, ther guard he stepped up, and he, not me, kill him.

"I had the big bag of things he had stolen, and he hed arranged fer me ter take 'em all, an jist how ter escape.

"It were some days arter thet he come and join me, and he said as how I would be hung fer ther murder of ther guard.

"Then he told me he were going inter ther road agent business, that he hed a pard who was one of the bosses of the Overland Company, and a Chineese who wan't afeard of ther devil, and he knew the country perfect.

"Well, sah, he forced me ter help him, and thet's the whole trufe of de matter, and if I has ter hang I can't tell no more dan de trufe."

"You have been more sinned against, Dusky Dick, than sinning, and if you will help us out now, I'll make it all right for you."

"Deed, Massa Bill, I does anything you says."

"How many men are in the band?"

"Ther chief, sah, who are Cap'n Coolhand, and who, when he hev his beard cut right, though he hed a smooth face when at ther fort, plays he is you, sah, but were known in ther camps as Shadder Bill."

"Ah!"

"He's been a actor, sah, and he kin make himself look like a couple o' dozen men if he wants ter."

"I see. Who else is he?"

"That boss of de trail, sah."

"David Jenks, you mean?"

"Yas, sah. It is he who gives up all de news to de chief."

"Aha! that accounts for the robberies, but he is safe, so now tell me of the others."

"Only the Chinees, sah, an' me."

"Those are all?"

"Yes, sah."

"You have prisoners, here?"

"We has, sah; but I already done tole de gemman I were goin' ter let you know."

"That is in your favor. The outlaws have harmed none of the prisoners?"

"No, sah."

"And the two young men taken from Left-Hand-Larry's coach?"

"They is in a little cabin up dis valley, sah."

"And where is Coolhand?"

"In de cabin whar de young men is."

"And the Chinees?"

"Yonder he come now, sah?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

CONCLUSION.

The Chinaman was approaching the camp-fire, and in the dim light of dawn did not see the men standing in the shadow of the timber.

Another moment, and Buffalo Bill had thrown his lasso, and, dragging the celestial to the earth, he was quickly bound by Lone Sam and the miner.

Then the party started for the upper cabin, half a mile away, and "Dusky," or Darkie Dick, knocked at the door, calling to Captain Coolhand to open it.

He did so, but with revolver in hand, and instantly recognized Buffalo Bill as the latter covered him.

There were two quick shots, but the scout was the quicker in drawing trigger, and the outlaw chief fell with a mortal wound.

He did not live many minutes, but before he died he told that "Dusky" was not guilty of the crimes of which he had been accused, and revealed just where all the stolen property could be found.

"I was born bad, and so I die. But so be it. It is in the chances of outlawry. I failed in the moment of success, and I accept my fate at your hands, Buffalo Bill."

Such were his last words.

The two young men, Sprague and Sanford, were found in the cabin heavily ironed, and their joy at their release was great.

On their way to the lower cabin all heard several shots fired, and hastened on.

"It's all right, pards! Thet Chinees were about ter git away, and I kilt him," cried Lige Lumley.

"I let ther dogs hev it, too," 'cause they come fer me," he added.

Then he explained that he had heard voices, had come out of the cabin, and saw the Chinaman lying bound at the camp-fire.

He walked toward him and saw that the Mongolian had just freed his feet of the bonds, and he continued:

"Ther Mexican gal hed a shooter they hed not tuk from her, and she hed given it to me."

"You bet it come in fine just then, and I let China hev it, and then come ther dogs on a rush, fer they had been hunting in ther timber, I guess."

"So I give them a dose of ther same medicine and they went ter sleep."

"Pard Bill, I said you would do it and you has."

Explanations followed all around. Mr. Insley quickly learned of Lola's safety, and that she was waiting for him at Lone Sam's cabin.

The bodies of Captain Coolhand and the Chinees were also taken along, and the party started for the stock-tender's cabin.

Of the meeting of father and daughter I need not speak; for it can be readily imagined.

Mr. Insley decided to go on to the fort, as the scout deemed it best, and the escort from the fort arriving under Lieutenant Keyes, accompanied his party there.

Cody remained at the cabin with Lone Sam and "Dusky," awaiting the coming of Captain Winter.

The latter had come through in an extra coach with all speed, and at once heard the whole story of his brother officer's treachery to the company, glanced at his body, heard what Dick had to say, and said:

"Well, Cody, you have kept your word, and done more than I believed it was possible for one man to do. The company will ever hold you in remembrance."

At the fort the whole story was again told, and Darkie Dick, or "Dusky," as the outlaw chief had christened him, was exonerated from all blame and became Buffalo Bill's black scout, of which appellation he was very proud.

The Giant Miner also decided to go East and show how he had been persecuted, and the two detectives found matters reversed, for they went as his prisoners, Lone Sam accompanying him, for it was shown that he was well-to-do in this world's goods, and had only come to the frontier to enjoy a couple of years of wild life and hunting.

On the way the extra coach followed the regular closely, but both passed through unmolested, and Mr. Insley and his lovely daughter reached their Eastern abiding place in safety with all their riches, and in less than a year Lola became the wife of Lee Roberts, once known as Lone Sam of the Overland.

The Giant Miner, it may be said, at once turned the two detectives over to the proper authorities, told his story in full, and proved the persecution against him.

The result was that he got the inheritance left him, and was merciful to the two men who had been in the employ of his foes.

Thus ends the trail on the Overland.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 85, will contain "Buffalo Bill's Single-Handed Game; or, Nipping Outlawry in the Bud." The great scout does some wonderful work with a lariat. How he corralled a whole band of desperadoes single-handed and the terrible fight he had with them later on will be told in this issue.

CURIOUS DREAMS



This is a ripping good contest.
From North, East, South and West, boys are trying for a prize.
Don't get left.
Send your dream in, and be happy.
For rules and list of prizes, see page 31.

A Bottomless Pit.

(By Walter Shepley, Providence, R. I.)

I had been reading Buffalo Bill's Phantom Arrow, and, feeling tired, went to bed and was soon sound asleep. I dreamed I was on a large plain with a belt of timber on my right. I was walking along quite slowly, when, straight from the timber, came an old man with a long beard. In one hand he held a large club, while in the other he held a chain attached to the collar of a large Dane dog. As soon as I saw him, I started to run, with the old man close at my heels. I had gone about fifty yards when I came to a dead stop, at the edge of a large hole. I tried to run again, but found I could not move my feet no matter how much I tried. Just as the old man got within a few feet of me, I fell over backward into what seemed to be a bottomless pit, for I kept going down, down, until I lost all consciousness. When I woke up I found myself on the floor.

My Dream.

(By Joseph V. Carey, Philadelphia, Pa.)

I.

A FIGHT.

I was standing on Girard avenue looking in a store window when somebody gave me a kick. I turned around to see who did it. There stood three niggers grinning from ear to ear. Two of them were my size, the other was a little smaller. I asked them who it was that kicked me. Then they all laughed at me. I became angry. As I am a boy that can take care of myself when the time comes, I did not like the way they treated me. The

largest coon of the bunch said: "What would you do if I did tell you who kicked you?" I said I would make him feel sorry for what he had done. They all closed in around me and I saw that there was only one thing to be done, and that was to fight. I struck out with my right hand and caught the largest coon between the eyes so hard that my knuckles cracked. The coon took a complete somersault in the air. I could not help laughing at the other two, the cowards, for soon as I knocked him down they took to their heels and ran as fast as they could, leaving their comrade lying on the pavement. This is my dream that came partly true the next day.

II.

THE TRUE PART.

It was about six o'clock the next day when I was coming down Venango street with a load of wood on a pushcart. I was going uphill when a nigger jumped on the front of the cart. I told him to get off, but he would not do it, so I gave him a push and he fell in the street. He got up and I saw that he meant fight. Being a little bit bigger than I, he thought he would scare me. He felt in his back pocket. I then thought he was going to draw a knife, but a friend of mine told me he had nothing, so I started in. The next thing he did was to make a kick at me. I punched him in the jaw an awful hard crack but he kept on trying to get me into a clinch, but I kept him away as much as possible. At last he got me where he wanted me. While we were clinching he bit me on the arm right at the muscle. I went to St. Luke's Hospital and had it treated. The doctor said it would have turned to blood poison if I had not had my coat on, and there was a piece bit out of my arm. When we were separated, the coon ran home as fast as he could. My friends say that I had the best of the fight all the way through until he bit me. I am happy to say that my arm

is better and ready for that coon any day he wants to try his funny business, but I have not seen him since.

Escape from An Awful Death.

(By Frank B. McGuigan, Chelsea, Mass.)

On a cold December night, after arriving home from a party, feeling fatigued and sleepy, I went quickly to bed. After lying for a short while thinking over the events of the evening, I soon fell asleep. My dream began. I dreamed that I was at a wedding. The surroundings, I thought, could hardly be exceeded in beauty. Suddenly in the midst of the gayety, the piercing cry of fire was heard, which echoed loudly throughout the building. With one great rush the people flocked to the stairs, which were now blocked by the flames. When the people saw that the only means of escape was shut off, they rushed madly for the roof. After a time the engines arrived, when ladders were quickly raised and the work of rescue began.

Many of the party were rescued when the flames were seen quickly creeping toward the roof and all escape by the ladders was now shut off. Just at this moment a great cry went up from below, as the flames could be seen enveloping the building.

Slowly, but surely, I could feel myself sinking with the roof into the midst of the flames. With a loud scream, I awoke from my dream only to find that the bedclothes were in bad condition and my body extending lengthwise across the bed. So ended my fearful dream.

A Strange Dream.

(By James E. Brunsdon, Sterling, Conn.)

One night I dreamed I was walking through the country, when I saw a squirrel running along a fence. I started to run after it, but a sudden growl at my back made me stop. I looked around, and grasped for my revolver, but had left it home. So I immediately took my knife. Just then a dog jumped for my throat. I ran the knife into his breast repeatedly, but no use; he was getting me by the throat when father called me to breakfast. Next day my dog was shot for biting a little girl.

A Curious Dream.

(By Elgin Bomar, College Station, Texas.)

On the night of April 25th, 1902, I fell asleep and dreamed a dream of which I will now write.

I was walking out for my afternoon exercise when I met a very peculiar looking man. He resembled a Frenchman very much, but his ears were sharply pointed, and when he took off his hat I noticed a growth on his head which very much resembled horns. He spoke in a pleasant voice, and told me he had come to take me to see a doomed man receive his punishment. He then made a few passes over my head, muttering some funny lingo, and then all became blank. When I awoke from the trance, after about two hours, I found myself in a very warm region. Looking about for my friend, I saw

he had taken off the citizen clothes he wore and was dressed in a suit of bright red.

He informed me that St. Peter had sent for the doomed man and said that I would have to take his place. I was led to a huge precipice that overhung a lake of melted lead, and told that I would first be thrown into it. Just then I felt some one grab my feet and somebody else grab my head. I was lifted bodily and thrown into—a tub of cold water by my roommates to wake me up for reveille had just sounded, and I believe I missed a fate more terrible than is meted out to Dante's unfortunate victims.

An Awful Sensation.

(By "Barron Hampton.")

As I stepped into the yard I heard a sharp report and felt a stinging about my head, and, seeing two men approach me from the other end of the yard, I staggered and fell on my face, for I felt that I had been shot.

The men came up to where I was lying, and one asked:

"Is he dead?"

The other replied:

"Yes, you got him that time."

The first man said:

"I'll see," and with that he took his two forefingers, and, placing one in each of my ears, he commenced to press on them, and, oh! what a terrible feeling it was.

It seemed as though he was trying to make his fingers meet in my head. It continued so long that I could not stand it any longer. A numbness came over me and I knew no more.

* * * * *

When I awoke I had the shivers, but, of course, I was glad it was all a dream. It seems to be a peculiar way of doing, but I have since tried it and found it, indeed, an awful sensation. Just try it, readers.

Chased by Indians.

(By Cleveland Heinrichs.)

I had just got through with a hard day's work and was feeling pretty tired, so I resolved to take a good rest. I ate a hearty supper and retired about eight o'clock. I was sleeping soundly when I started to dream. I dreamed I was visiting my grandfather in the country and had started out hunting early in the morning by myself. I wandered through the woods until it began to grow dark. The birds had ceased singing and the owl started its frightful whooping. I started for home, but, to my surprise, I was lost. I wandered around until I saw a campfire in the distance. I walked to about twenty yards from the campfire and peered through some brush, when, to my surprise, they were Indians, and I started to retreat when something grabbed me. I turned and saw it was a redskin. I struck him in the face and he fell, uttering that fearful war-cry. I started on a run with all the Indians after me. It seemed as if every time I would take a step I would fall and the Indians would gain on me. I kept looking around to see how close they were to me. They were gaining more and more, when, lo, I fell

again. I had ran off a steep bank. I could feel myself going through the air; it was a terrible feeling. I looked below and saw the rocks which I was sure to hit on. I went nearer and nearer to my death, when, at last, I hit the bottom, and I woke up with a yell. I opened my eyes to see where I was. I was overcome with joy when I found it was nothing but a dream. I turned over and fell asleep again, not waking up until the next morning, ready for a good day's work.

Jonah and the Whale.

(By Lloyd B. Roberts, New Orleans, La.)

I dreamed that I went fishing to try my luck with my new fishing outfit. While I was on the bank fishing, I heard a splash, and, looking up, saw an alligator, that in my dream seemed to be about 100 feet long. I paid no attention to him, but went on fishing. I got a bite after a while and landed a large trout. When I was taking him off the hook, "Swish, bang," something hit me that knocked me down. When I came to, I was in the alligator's stomach. I saw Jonah in there. "Hello," says I. "What are you doing here instead of being in a whale?" He said, "People made a mistake when they said that a whale swallowed me, for I was in a boat taking pictures with Buffalo Bill's camera that I got from Street & Smith." After a while we concluded to escape. We started, and explored through a tunnel for about a mile and came upon a lake. We saw fish swimming in it and we thought we would take a sail. So Jonah looked for a boat, but he could not find one. I went and found a log. Jonah said, "Let's get this log and escape." "All right, come on," I said. We got aboard and drifted down the stream. After a while we came to the end, and, looking out, saw daylight.

I shouted for joy. But the next moment I found myself sprawled out on the floor, and mother hit me a whack that made my ears sing for an hour. She said I will see that you don't read any more of Buffalo Bill's stories. But I reminded her of the prize, and I won her over after a while and gave three cheers for Buffalo Bill. This is my dream.

Tragedy in Dreamland.

(By John Nicholson, Edinburg, Indiana.)

After about three hours of restlessness, I fell asleep. The scene that then swept over my vision comes back to me very plainly. A deep, black creek flowed between two very high banks and an iron bridge spanned the waters, over which the trains tore daily at their highest speed.

I was standing upon the bank when I noticed that one of the rails was displaced and lay across the one at its side. I clambered down the side of the bank to the bridge and began tugging at the rail.

But it did no good, the rail was too heavy for me, and I was just laying it down, when I heard a fluttering and blowing above my head. Looking up, I saw two great red hands with black nails, and the fingers were clawing wildly in the air. They clutched desperately at my throat. I pleaded for mercy, but my words were only answered by the far-away whistling of the train.

I began to pray, from terror. The hands pressed my

head against the rail. Nearer, nearer, I heard the rolling of the train, coming at me madly. It was on the bridge shaking it with terrible violence. The hands clutched tighter.

Upon me! Crash! then all was still. I sneaked quietly back to bed for fear of waking my brother.

The Thunder Storm.

(By William Schmatz, Cleveland, Ohio.)

It was in the month of August that two chums and myself went camping into some very dense forest lands, some twenty miles from our town.


I lay down one night rather early, and soon started dreaming. I dreamed we were fishing in a very calm stream and the fish did not bite very well, when all of a sudden something tugged rather hard at my line. I started hauling it in when we observed that our boat was moving down stream; faster and faster went the boat, until it fairly flew over the water, and I holding on as if my life depended on it, not knowing enough to let go. Suddenly we heard the roaring of a fall in the distance; nearer and nearer we seemed to draw, until we were on the very brink, then down we shot. We landed with a great explosion, to find myself awake amid a terrible thunderstorm. I got up and awoke my chums, who were still sleeping amid all. We slept no more that night.

How I Didn't Kill a Bear.

(By Herman Balk, Minneapolis, Minn.)

One night I was reading a Buffalo Bill story and when I was through I began to feel sleepy. At last I went to bed and began to dream. One of my dreams was very curious. I will tell you about it. I was out hunting and I only had shot two rabbits. I was hunting all morning and began to feel tired and hungry. I selected a nice little place to eat my lunch right near a big oak tree. I had set my gun against the tree, and began eating my lunch. In about two minutes I suddenly heard the cracking of dry brush. I jumped up and, to my great consternation, I saw a huge bear walking briskly toward me. I never once thought of my gun, but quickly I reached for some branches of the oak tree, and climbed up. Bruin sniffed around and spied my lunch and he gobbled it up pretty quick. Then he sniffed around the tree and, rising on his hind-legs, he placed his shaggy arms around the tree and began climbing up.

Then all at once the clear, distinct report of my gun rang out on the stillness of the air, and Bruin set up a roar which was awful to hear. He then ran a short distance away and dropped down on the ground and then he gave a few kicks and groans and expired. Bruin had fired my own gun off by setting the hammer of the lock in motion with his hind-feet, but he had been unlucky in his aim. Then all at once I woke up and found it to be a dream.

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